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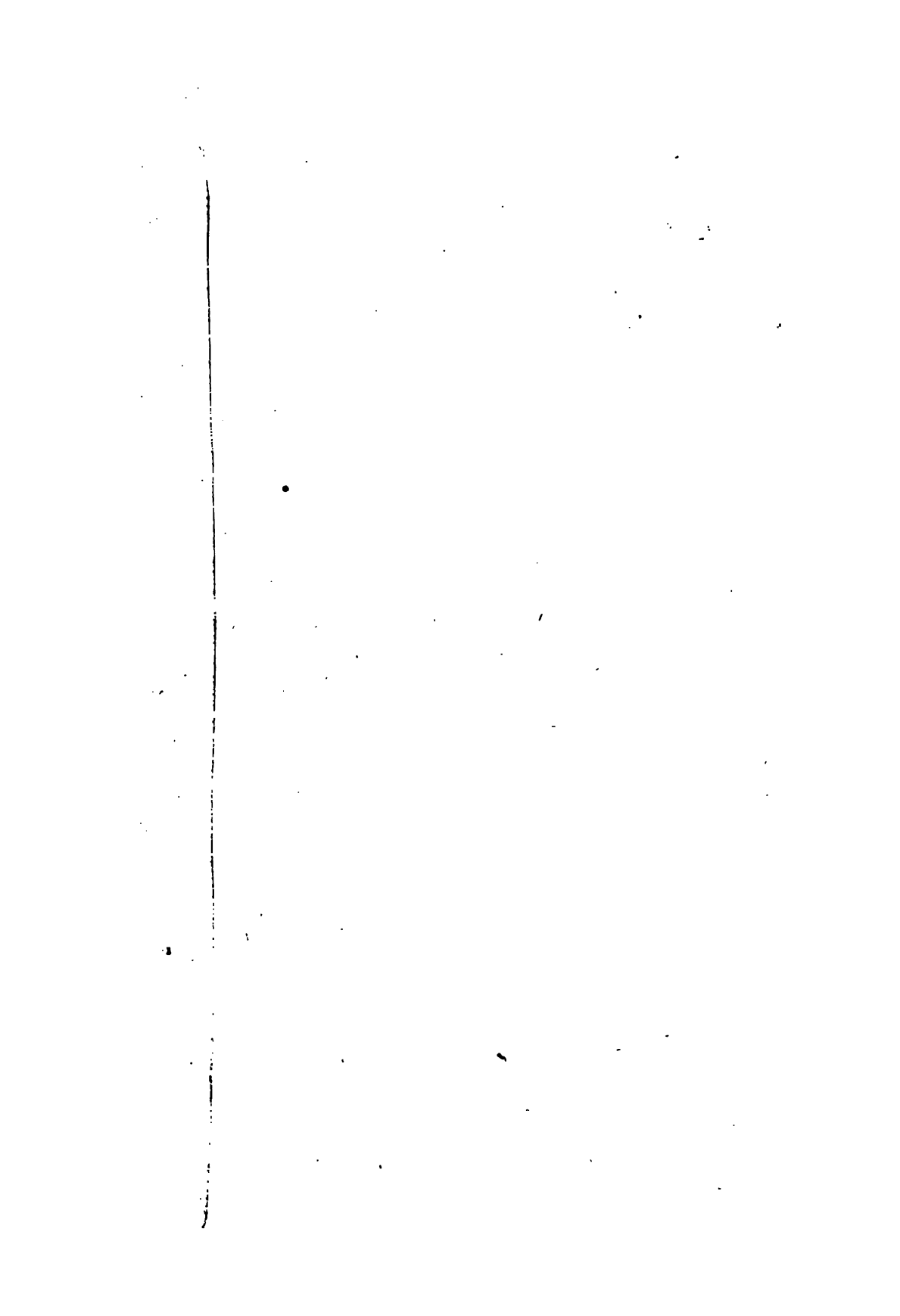


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**JAMES FISHER .**

A  
SPRING-DAY:  
OR,  
CONTEMPLATIONS  
ON  
SEVERAL OCCURRENCES

*let*  
WHICH NATURALLY STRIKE THE EYE IN THAT  
DELIGHTFUL SEASON.

---

BY JAMES FISHER.

---

*I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.*

PSALM LXXVII. 12.

*For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;  
the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing  
of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in  
our land.*

SONG II. 11, 12.

---

THE SECOND EDITION,

CAREFULLY CORRECTED AND IMPROVED.

Edinburgh:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY JOHN MOIR, ROYAL BANK CLOSE;

SOLD BY OGLE AND AIKMAN, EDINBURGH;

WILLIAM SMITH, STATIONERS COURT; AND OGLE, GREAT TURN-STYLE,

LONDON; AND MANY OF THE PRINCIPAL BOOKSELLERS

IN GREAT BRITAIN.

1806.

*Wm*

*W. L. Smith*

BV4832  
F55

*Entered in Stationers Hall.*

## LADY DOUGLAS

OF KELLHEAD.

MADAM,

*YOUR* exemplary character for benevolence, with every other Christian virtue, so long the ornament of your worthy Ancestors, together with the honour of the Douglas Family, being so well known, anticipates any thing that might come from my pen on these subjects. All I have to observe is, that I think myself highly honoured in being allowed to dedicate the following sheets to your Ladyship ; which, next to Divine Providence, I commit to your patronage. And that that Almighty Being whose goodness appeareth so conspicuous in Spring, may bless you and yours, is the sincere wish of,

MADAM,

*Your Ladyship's much obliged,**Most obedient, and very humble Servant,*

JAMES FISHER.

ANNAN,  
JULY 21. 1803. }





## PREFACE.

---

CREATION is a subject which ought to fill every reasonable creature with wonder ; and in no season more than Spring. Then Nature, having burst the iron fetters of stern winter, and broken down its icy prison, shivering at first, creeps gently forth ; but now, having become vivid, wantons gaily over all the fields, strewing the earth with flowers, and pouring melody from every grove, while it awakens in the human breast agreeable sensations, enlivening the mind to sublimity of thought and sweet contemplation. It is therefore in order to point out some suitable subjects for this, which may be happily improved for our advantage, that the following work is composed.

I am well aware, that those who expect to find in it, that elegance of expression, sublimity of thought, or strength of judgment, which the subjects require, will be much disappointed ; and also that those who wish

to shew their skill in criticism, may find ample scope for employing their pens.

All I shall say by way of recommendation of it to my Readers is, I hope they will find nothing in it contrary to sound principles, but may find some little entertainment to pass a vacant hour, and some passages which, through the Divine blessing, to them may prove useful. And that this last may be the case, hath been, during the time of composing it, and still is, the sincere wish of its

AUTHOR,

*A few Lines Spoken at EDNAM, the birth-place of the celebrated THOMSON, when in the Room where it is supposed he was born.*

AND is this the place where he who sung in strains sublime the sweets of spring, with all the beauties of the flushing year, was born! the honour of his nation, and the delight of the Muses,---whose works, chiefly those of his Seasons, stand unrivalled even by the Georgics themselves; nor could Virgil, that Prince of Latin Poets, boast of more harmonious numbers than thou, O THOMSON! whose lofty verses, fam'd through the world, supply the place of a stately monument, which, if ever due to the memory of a Poet, thine well deserved. Up that majestic ladder, the rounds of which thou hast so elegantly described, may all ascend to contemplate, not only the God of Nature, but also the God of Grace, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the worlds were made. If this be not the use which is made of thy lofty strains of poetry, and my low themes of prose, I'm afraid all will prove but a trifling amusement.

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A  
DESCANT  
ON  
CREATION.

---

THE works of God are a great book, consisting of three incomprehensible volumes, namely, Nature, Providence, and Grace; which continually lie open for the perusal of all in heaven and all on earth. It was on the former of these man first opened his eyes in paradise.

Beholding the magnificence of the ample page, how astonished would he be at finding himself, and observing creation around! Incomparably more so than man now, who is born of a woman, and gradually comes from an unthinking to a thinking state; from infancy to childhood, and from child-



hood to man. Soon as the stupendous wonders permitted his mental powers to act in regularity, would not such, or similar, be the reflections of his then perfectly pure and rational soul? What am I! Where am I! Of what am I, and all around me, made! Who made us! and for what end was I, and all creation, formed! A divine ray shining through his soul, doubtless, resolved the all-important questions, making known the Creator and the end of creation.

Struck with amazement at the infinite greatness, glory, and transcendent goodness, of the Lord God his Maker, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the bounties of creation, would not he, for some considerable time, be lost in gratefully wondering, especially at the infinite kindness of the Lord God, in condescending so low, as graciously to enter into covenant with him, his creature, and that in name of all his posterity! Those who are of opinion that man did not stand more than one day, allow him but little time indeed, either for admiring the works of creation, or celebrating the praises of the Creator.

Although, in consummate wisdom, for the wisest of reasons, the Most High God hath seen it best to conceal from us how long, or how short, man continued in a state of innocence ; yet it is probable, both from scripture and reason, that he stood for a good space of time. First, when we reflect, if it were possible for any, in a moment, to be removed into the midst of some great country or city, without his knowledge ; upon looking up, what would his astonishment be ? All wonder---all admiration ! How would he stand amazed ! lost in reflection, ---confounded every power of his mind ! Whether in a dream, in a vision, or awake, he beholds all, he is equally uncertain. Not knowing what to think, would not he stand in contemplation, not for a short space, but for a long time ? And can we suppose that Adam, as has been already observed, would be less astonished at finding himself, and beholding creation around ? nay, certainly unspeakably more so would he be. In the other case, the powers of the mind and body were not new, but in that of Adam perfectly so : till that time unfelt and unknown. At once, perfect as he was, how inconceiv-

ably great would his astonishment at himself be to himself.

Is it not then reasonable to suppose, that, for a considerable time, he could be employed in nothing else, but in alternately wondering and praising? especially if we consider that he was created after the Divine Image, and consequently, nothing was so natural or delightful to him, as the beauty of holiness, in adoring his God, and admiring the works of his hands. And upon the almighty Author of his being graciously vouchsafing to enter into covenant with him, would he not be excited to pour out his soul in still more lively anthems of praise, if livelier were possible, and higher strains of gratitude, while all the man was one continued flame of love to God? Can we then think, in these blest moments, when all his soul was transported with wonder, love, and joy, or, for a considerable time afterwards, he would feel even the smallest want of an help meet for him? Next, man being created an active, intelligent being, was not to let those powers with which he was endued, lie dormant, but exercise these talents for the glory of his Creator, and the good

of creation ; consequently, we find, from the sacred page, the Lord God filling his hands with suitable employment, by placing him in the garden of Eden, for the purpose of dressing and keeping it ; and, in the mean time, bringing to him all the beasts of the earth, and fowls of the air, in order to receive their names.

Now, any who considers what vast numbers of different species there are, and the still greater varieties of each species, must reasonably suppose it would take a pretty long space of time for Adam to give them their names ; for, though he was perfect, yet he was not an infinite, but a finite creature ; and so could not do things at once, but must take time for his work, and employ his wisdom in consulting the natures of the different species of those creatures, and give them their designations accordingly, which doubtless he did.

After this, we find the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon him ; and he slept, which no doubt took up some portion of time. Upon his awakening, how would he be surprised, at beholding a creature so like



himself, the comeliest of all creation around ? and still more so, when by revelation he knew she was made of a rib from his side ? Bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, he confessed she was, and called her *Woman*. Thus finding an help meet for him, uniting in affection, they became one, and proved that sacred bond which is so indispensably necessary for the upholding of the human kind. Can we then suppose that Eve, immediately upon her arising from the side of her husband, would run gadding abroad among the trees of the garden ? Surely no, but, surprised at each other, wondering at themselves and all around, and she most, if more could be, being last brought into existence, joining in sweet conversation, admiring creation, and praising their Creator ; the man having taught her the knowledge of HIM, and declared the covenant, they doubtless spent their first conjugal hours in that very place, or arbour, where Adam first received the hand of his innocent bride from indulgent heaven. Now, if it was the duty, as well as a great part of the employment of man, in a state of innocence, to contemplate the works of God ; it certainly is and ought to be ours, their fallen race.

Meditation is a duty to which the rational soul naturally prompts man. It was by contemplating the works of creation, that the heathens themselves came to the knowledge of a God ; “ because that which may “ be known of God, is manifest in them, “ for God hath showed it unto them ; for “ the invisible things of him from the crea- “ tion of the world, are clearly seen, being “ understood by the things that are made, “ even his eternal power and Godhead,” Rom. i. 19, 20. If heathens made so great a progress by reading in the volume of creation, at the dim light of nature, what ought Christians to do in the sunshine of divine revelation !

The royal Psalmist, struck with beholding a few of the great outlines of creation, even the celestial bodies, crieth out with rapture and astonishment to the Lord, saying, “ What “ is man, that thou art mindful of him ! and “ the son of man, that thou visitest him ! ” Psalm viii. 4. And well might he do so, in consideration of that infinite power, wisdom, greatness, and glory, that hung those immensely ponderous luminaries in the midst of the vast expanse of ether, pois-



ed them so nicely, and bade them, to a punctilio, observe their courses, and still supporteth these vast orbs in their stations. I say, in consideration of that Almighty Being, who wrought out the heavens with his fingers, adorning them with stars, which in lustre, number, and magnitude, far surpass the ken of the most acute astronomer, and lighted up these wonderful lamps, or rather globes of fire, in the stupendous arch---that a Being of such infinite wisdom, power, and glory, should condescend to take notice of such a little thing as man ! yea such a vile thing as man had made himself.

But O, what notice was it that Jehovah did take of him ! “Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth !” it was not only to create him a holy and happy creature, nor, when he had fallen by his iniquity, still to continue to preserve him in being, and supply him out of his bountiful hand with numberless temporal good things ; but how shall it be told for wonder and amazement ! that that same God, who made the stars, counteth their numbers, and calleth them all by their names ; measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the

span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure ; and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance ; before whose face the earth and the heavens flee away, and in whose presence the highest seraphim in heaven veil their faces with their wings, (Gen. i. 16. Psalm cxlvii. 4. Isaiah xl. 12. Rev. xx. 11. Isaiah vi. 2.) sent his own eternal, only begotten, and well-beloved Son, one in essence with himself, into this world, to become an infant of days, to lead a sorrowful life, and at length to bear all that infinite wrath, or equal to it, which the elect should have borne through all eternity, and die the shameful, painful, accursed death of the cross for man ; vile, sinful man, his avowed enemy !

O, unspeakable love ! was ever love like this ? Well might the royal Psalmist stand amazed at it, when he considered that that God, who wrought out the heavens with his fingers, made the moon and the stars, and all the host of heaven ; sustaineth all the planets with his hand, and swaddled the ocean with thick darkness, setting doors and bars, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther ; and here shall thy proud waves be stay-

ed : should himself be wrapt in swaddling  
cloathes, and laid in a manger ; have his  
hands and feet nailed to the accursed tree of  
the cross, groan, bleed, and die, for such a  
sinful creature as man ! If the king of Israel  
was lost in thought at viewing this afar off,  
what ought we to be who live in gospel days !  
The works of nature naturally lead the con-  
templative mind up the stream of creation  
to God the fountain-head. This they did to  
David, and so should they do to us. All the  
works which we behold shew forth his wis-  
dom, power, and goodness. “ The heavens  
“ declare the glory of God, and the firma-  
“ ment sheweth his handy-work : day unto  
“ day uttereth speech, and night unto night  
“ sheweth knowledge : there is no speech  
“ nor language where their voice is not heard ;  
“ their line is gone out through all the earth,  
“ and their words to the end of the world.”  
Ps. xix. 1. to 4.

These, though in silence, preach a loud  
sermon in the ear of reason ; every planet  
declaring, as it revolveth, that it is made and  
sustained by an Almighty hand ; while every  
comet which blazeth with incredible swift-  
ness through ether, proclaimeth, as it shoot-

eth along, the arm that launched it is infinite; and all the constellations shew forth, as they shine, the goodness, wisdom, power, and glory of their infinite Almighty Maker. Nor are terrestrial things less silent in his praise. If we only cast our eyes around, and behold the surface of the globe, how may we be struck with wonder at the agreeable variety of objects which present themselves to our view? Not a mountain, rock, plain, vale, wood, river, nor sea, but proclaimeth aloud its Maker's goodness, and is stored with inhabitants, animate and inanimate, suitable to its nature.

The mountains, being a repository for granite, metals, and minerals, which are so indispensably necessary for mechanical labours and medicine, display the wisdom of the Creator; for if such had not been stored up in the bowels of eminences, how scarcely, if at all, could they be dug up? For, where should the miner find a descent to carry off the water which otherwise must deluge his work? And is it not from the hills we have our springs, which, falling down their sides in rills, at the bottom are formed into rivers, which gliding gently along, are thereby ren-



dered pure and healthful : whereas if, otherwise, the surface of the globe had been level, they would have stood stagnated, and proved rather prejudicial than helpful and nourishing to plants and animals.

Besides, do not the mountains beautify the landscape, and keep the eye from being fatigued with space, and likewise constitute a proper temperature of the air ? where the climate is cold, keeping the vallies warm ; and in hot countries preserving a refreshing cooling breeze, on their summits, for the benefit and health of those who regale themselves therewith. Also from their tops they afford an agreeable prospect of the lowlands ; and enable to descry enemies at a distance in time of war, and so timely to provide for safety,

To this we may add, they are admirably adapted for the accommodation of wild-fowl and beasts, nay, even serpents, which otherwise would prove troublesome to man. There the adder and snake in wanton curls can sport among the heath, and bask themselves amid the sunny beams, without either much annoying man, or being annoyed by him :

“The high hills are a refuge for the wild  
“goats, and the rocks for the conies,” Ps.  
civ. 18. Come we now to the vales, which  
are so well adapted for culture and vegeta-  
tion: here again appeareth the goodness of  
God; for if all had been hills and moun-  
tains, how fatigued would man and beast  
have been in culturing them for their suste-  
nance? But, blessed be the Lord, though, in  
consequence of the fall, he said man should  
eat bread in the sweat of his face, he did not  
say he should eat it in the blood thereof,  
which doubtless would oft have been the  
case if this had been the form of the globe.

Let us then adore his name for its com-  
modious figure: and, while we culture our  
valleys, admire his handy-works: for not  
a plant, herb, nor flower, grows in them,  
but sheweth forth the glory and wisdom of  
their Maker. And seeing we cannot fully  
comprehend how a single pile of grass begins  
to vegetate and strike forth its roots in the  
earth, let us lie low in the valley of humility,  
nor dare to arraign the divine decrees, but  
saying, with the father of the faithful, “Shall  
“not the Judge of all the earth do right?”  
Gen. xviii. 25.



Next, the majestic appearance of the forests should strike our minds with a due sense of that majesty and power which made and reared their lofty plants ; and of that goodness which hath made them of such utility to man and beast. And as for the rivers, not to speak of what use they are for preserving and nourishing their finny inhabitants, which so plentifully furnish our tables ; they are of absolute necessity for the support and nourishment of both animal and vegetable life.

In them, not only all men, but all the beasts of the earth, may freely quench their thirst : which sheweth the boundless beneficence of our almighty Creator. Rivers are thereby fit emblems of the water of life, to which all the sons of Adam are invited to come and drink freely, without money and without price. Isaiah lv. 1. Rev. xxi. 17.

It is wonderful, that all the rivers are exhaled in vapours from the sea by the heat of the sun ; refined in the clouds, distilled in gentle showers on the earth, and return thither again. Doth not the wisdom and

goodness of God appear greatly in this ? For, if the vapours were not thus drawn forth from the deep, refined and distilled, we could neither have fresh water nor rivers, and so no life or vegetation on the earth. And, on the other hand, if those vapours did not return again to the ocean in rivers, the earth would soon be deluged, and become unfit for the habitation of man or beast ;—nay, in process of time, become a sea itself, while the ocean became a dry land.

Let us then bless the most high God for this wise disposal of things ; and, as we have our life and being from him, as the show-ers accomplish the end for which they are sent on the earth, and then again return to the sea ; so may we answer the end for which we were sent into the world, and at last return, through the merits of Christ, to God in heaven, the fountain of our being and happiness !

Turn we now to the ocean itself : what a world of waters are there ! and what a water of wonders ! In this “ great and wide “ sea are things creeping innumerable, both

otherwise qualified them for performing the functions of animal life.

How admirably are they suited with bills! whereas, if their mouths had been large, and in their heads, as those of quadrupeds are, how could they then have taken up small particles of grain from the earth, or digged insects out of the mould? whereas now, by their beaks, they can peck such with ease; and if without claws, many of them which roost on the trees could not have done so, but must have been much exposed to the ravages of beasts during the night.

Those of them which are of the aquatic kind are all provided with members answerable for gathering their food in the watery element: such as are swimmers, being web-footed, and having their breasts and bellies strongly lined with downy feathers, close as scales, are thereby qualified for remaining long in the water, and defended from the injuries of its cold; and those which cannot swim, but wade, with long legs and necks, whereby they are enabled to hunt in the shallows for the finny tribe; some of them, too, such as the heron, having the middle

claw on each foot toothed like a saw, can thereby more readily seize and hold their slippery prey. All which show the bounty and care of the indulgent Creator, who hath left none of his creatures destitute of suitable means for preserving life. But though these kinds find ample provision in the waters, what becomes of those that live wholly on the land, which neither sow nor gather into barns? Shall they starve? No: for we are told our heavenly Father feedeth them. Mat. vi. 26.

Grudge not then, ye husbandmen, when the birds of the air descend upon your cultivated fields, and peck a few of those innumerable grains, which your Creator and theirs hath bountifully bestowed upon you; nor wish too keenly for their destruction; for, perhaps they serve you more than all the injury they do. "This the inhabitants  
"of New England experienced, when, after  
"they had given a reward for destroying  
"the purple jack-daws, the intent was al-  
"most effected at the cost of the inhabi-  
"tants; who discovered, at length, that  
"Providence had not formed these seeming-  
"ly destructive birds in vain. Notwith-



“ standing they caused such havoc among  
“ the grain, they made ample recompence  
“ by clearing the ground of the noxious  
“ worms with which it abounds. As soon  
“ as the birds were destroyed, the reptiles  
“ had full leave to multiply, and the conse-  
“ quence was the total loss of the grass in  
“ 1749, when the New Englanders, too late  
“ repentants, were obliged to get their hay  
“ from Pennsylvania, and even from Great  
“ Britain \*.”

As for the beasts of the earth, no less conspicuous doth the wisdom and goodness of the Creator appear in them, whether we consider their numbers, uses, colours, or forms. That those quadrupeds which are of a ferocious kind should be few in number, and those which are gentle and docile, and of great utility to man, very numerous, is certainly a display of infinite wisdom and kindness.

The more we consider the latter, the greater reason we have to adore the Lord of all for his wise disposal of things.

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\* See Encyclopædia Britannica.

Did the horse, that most beautiful of all the four-footed kind, the strength and courage of which is terrible in war; or the lusty ox, which bellows in our fields, know properly what strength they are possessed of,—would the one, by means of a simple boy, be made to draw in the plough, and drudge in our carriages; or the other be driven or turned away by a little child? How wisely, then, hath our Creator apparently deprived them of this knowledge, or magnified man greatly in their eyes! otherwise, how would the labours of the husbandman be facilitated!

Is not the Creator's goodness, too, greatly manifested in the provision he hath made, both for the protection and subsistence of the inferior animals? Those of them which have the least means of defending themselves by offensive operations, against the attacks of enemies, are either put more immediately under the care of man, such as the sheep, or enabled to elude the foe by agility and swiftness, such as the hare; while all of them are supplied with suitable food out of His ever-liberal hand. Let us then adore the bounteous Lord, since the highest angel

in heaven is not above his controul, nor the meanest reptile on earth beneath his notice.

The fishes of the sea, likewise, have their share in proclaiming his wonderful works. Could we follow them in their excursions through the pathless deep, and behold their manœuvres, and the gambols of the leviathan, we might justly cry out, How wonderful are thy works, O Lord! And is it not a great manifestation of infinite counsel and wisdom, that those of the finny tribe which are of the greatest benefit to man, are most plenteous and remain near the shores; whereas the others, like the voracious among the fowls, and the ferocious amongst the beasts, are, in general, more remote from the habitations of men?

Shall we next come home to ourselves, and take a view of man?

And what a wonderful creature is man! whether we consider the texture of his body, or the formation of his soul! What a curious structure is the body! consisting of various senses, parts, and members, admira-



bly framed for performing all the functions of human life, nothing that could be wanting, and nothing superfluous ; all situated most conveniently for use, ornament, and mutual assistance ; displaying the wisdom and goodness of our Almighty Maker. His erect form sheweth he was made for the contemplation of high and noble objects, and to look for happiness somewhere else than from the earth ; besides, this elegant structure of the body, with the majesty of the countenance, serve to over-awe the brutal creation.

If we consider the senses, how wonderful are they, and how conveniently situated ! As watchmen used not to be placed in a low or obscure situation, but on the walls or towers of the capital, to give timely information of danger to the monarch and inhabitants that lodged within ; so the noblest senses are not stationed low in the body, but wisely in the head, said by some to be the capital of the soul, so that they may give timely intelligence of hurt to that rational monarch. How astonishing are the properties of the eye ! displaying the wisdom and power (which, indeed, all the other senses do,) of our almighty Maker, as by it things

are descried at a great distance, and the colour and form thereof, that moment it beholds them, communicated to the soul. By it we can find our way amidst the pathless ocean; distinguish faces, however much alike; view the curiosities of machinery; take up the stateliness, elegance, and ornaments of architecture, and even canvass the celestial bodies themselves.

Without the sense of vision, to us the rainbow would display its variegated colours in vain, the delight of the landscape be lost, and the exquisite tinges of the tulip, with all the retinue of flowers, be exhibited to no purpose. The sense of hearing, too, how surprising it is! as by it sounds are distinguished, and the pleasure of harmony communicated to the mind. Nor is that of smelling less wonderful, whereby agreeable odours are received with pleasure, and the contrary with reluctance, and by which we are led to take food and frequent places, which are most conducive to our health. Likewise that of the palate; how nicely does it distinguish betwixt that which is agreeable and disagreeable to the appetite, receiving the things of the former with com-

placency, and these of the latter with dislike. Nor is that of feeling less astonishing, the sense of which is diffused over the whole body, as that which is of absolute necessity for the comfortable existence of the animal part. And how strange is it, that, no sooner an object is felt by the hand, or any other part of the body, than an idea thereof is conceived by the mind.

Three of these centinels, or out-posts, that are more absolutely necessary for the preservation of the body, are sheltered from the injuries of the weather, or attacks of enemies, in little chambers as it were, or watch-houses.

Thus the eye, upon the approach of any danger, quickly shuts its two-leaved gates. And though the hearing and smelling have their ports continually open, yet are they not less secured, being stationed a good way back ; whereas, if these intelligencers were posted entirely on the outside of the head or face, the slightest injuries might deprive us of their service, (an argument of infinite wisdom and care.)

Now, if it were not for the senses, how could the soul be charmed with the beauties of nature, receive agreeable sensations from the power of melody, delight in the fragrance of the field, relish food, or find comfort in life ? These senses, in part, are indeed common to the brutal creation, but there is one faculty which man alone possesseth, which setteth him far superior to all the creatures below ; and that is the power of speech, whereby he can address the Divine Being, and converse with men, which is called in Scripture, “ the glory of man,” Ps. xvi. 9.—xxx. 12.—lvii. 8.—cviii. 1. What a pity is it, then, that this faculty, with which God hath so highly distinguished him above all the other creatures on earth, should be used in blaspheming and dishonouring Him, and in idle and trifling conversation !

In the head, likewise, is the brain, the fountain of the animal spirits, the principle of all sense and motion, and said to be the palace-royal of the soul : not to speak of the numerous nerves, which from it are distributed throughout the whole human system, how wonderfully is it preserved and kept from disorder by a very thin membrane of



a golden colour, called the Pious Mother! which straitly embraces it, and keeps it from quashing; round which is another more loose, but tougher and stronger: next is the skull, which is hard as a bone, and of remarkable tenacity, covered with skin and hair; thus defended, it cannot easily be injured. And as for the heart, the principal of all animal life and action, called, by some, the Sun of the little world, being that where the vital flame is constantly kept up; how carefully is it deposited in the centre of the trunk of the body! transversely in the cavity of the breast, inclosed in its own membrane, called Pericardium, which contains a transparent liquor that facilitates its motion and prevents friction.

This was doubtless that blood and water, contained about the heart, which followed the spear of that vile miscreant who pierced our Saviour's sacred side. Amazing love! that he should permit this even to be done after he was dead! that the world might be assured of the truth of his death. Oh the greatness of the wrath of almighty God, and the heinous nature of our sins, that nothing

The brutal creation, indeed, enjoy those powers in some measure after their kind ; to instance only that of the dog for all. Does he not understand that which is good or hurtful for him ? for, place him upon the edge of a high precipice, where, on the one side he can come from it with safety, will he not discern his danger in leaping, and shew his will in choosing to come down the other way ? And if he has often done a wrong, and been frequently beaten for it, will he not thereby become sensible that that is displeasing to his owner ? And if he see or hear his master coming the time he is doing that particular fault, as, for instance, lying in a bed or so, will he not shew his consciousness of it, and his fear of punishment, by his immediately leaping out, or giving over what he was doing ? And does he not shew his memory, when he has lost his master, in running to the different houses or places which he used to frequent, seeking him ? and his thought, or consideration, at the meeting of two ways, when running before, stopping at an uncertainty, till such time as he sees which road his owner will take ? And that he is possessed with passions, is evident from his

affection for his master, fear, anger, and resentment of injuries.

Now, since brutes are thus endowed, this question will naturally occur, What pre-eminence hath a man above a beast? I answer, A very great deal. The spirit, or brutal soul, is from the earth, and answereth to man and the things of this life; and that in a very limited capacity: whereas the soul of man is from God, and answereth to God; and the things not only of this life, but also of that which is eternal, in a most extensive degree; being highly distinguished by the faculty of rationality or reason, whereby it can discriminate and clearly distinguish betwixt moral good and evil, truth and falsehood; assemble ideas, comparing one with another through means of intermediate ones; reflect and deduce causes from effects, and effects from causes, and so find out truth from error, right from wrong, a future state from a present, and delight in the contemplation of infinity itself.

What a noble creature then is the soul of man! True, indeed, it, by the fall of Adam, (as Mephibosheth falling out of his nurse's



lap), was maimed in all its powers, and greatly defiled, yet, blessed be God, through faith, Christ Jesus, that Physician of value, will heal and purify all again, and set it down to feast continually at the King's table above. 2 Sam. iv. 4. and ix. 13. And seeing God hath thus highly distinguished us from the inferior creatures, not only by reason, but also in the use and capacity of all our mental powers, how thankful should we be, and improve them for his honour and glory, for which end we were endowed with them, and after whose image we were made ! And, on the other hand, treat with gentleness those inferior creatures, which bear so much of ours. The soul of man, a most active intelligent being, must, of necessity, according to its essence, always be thinking on something, and can it be employed in a more reasonable service, or train of thought, than meditating on the fountain of its being, and his wonderful works ?

A  
SPRING-DAY.

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CONTEMPLATION I.

ON THE DAWN OF THE MORNING.

WHILE drowsy mortals are as yet supinely snoring on their couches, some, it may be, struggling in their dreams with sore conflicts, and others exulting in imaginary bliss ; let me, this fine morning, stray into the fields, and while I wet my foot with the virgin dews, regale my scent with the balmy odours which the zephyrs breathe from the flowering herbage ; the beauties of which are at present obscured by the darkness.

Now, in this season, of all others best adapted for meditation, may I employ my thoughts on suitable subjects, and begin with contemplating the goodness of my Maker, in bringing me safely through the last night, acknowledging, with the prophet, “ his mer-

"cies are new every morning ;" while yonder dappled East declareth, that " great is his " faithfulness," who hath promised that there shall be day and night while the earth remaineth.

The light now approaches, how feeble are its rays ! Yet I know it to be the dawn, for I begin to discover some of the objects around me. How rapid is its motion ! like the swift tide which overflows the sand till all is lost in one vast ocean ; so prevails the light over the darkness, but with incredible more velocity, till night is overwhelmed in the glare of day. " Truly the light is sweet, " (saith the inspired Solomon,) and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the " sun." Eccl. xi. 7. This putteth me in mind of the creation of the world, when God said, " Let there be light, and there was light," Gen. i. 3. Had that omnipotent, infinitely gracious word, not been spoken, how miserable, if at all, had our world been ! man would have groped in darkness, and worn out a short life in wretchedness and grief.

But this calleth to my memory a still more interesting subject ; namely, the fall of man,

and the first promise of the Gospel; when Adam, by his awful apostacy from the path of rectitude, eternally benighted, not only himself, but all his posterity, in misery and woe: Thus was man in gross darkness, going headlong down to the pit of destruction, when, lo! a voice was heard which might well astonish both heaven and earth, for it was the voice of mercy, the Lord God saying, as it were, Suffer him not to go down to the pit, for I have found a ransom, Job xxxiii. 24.; when, to the wonder of angels, and the astonishment of men, he said in effect, as he said with respect to the natural world, "Let there be light."

When he gave that infinitely merciful and unspeakably precious promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. this no doubt surprised Adam with joy inexpressible, and enkindled such a flame of gratitude in his soul as eternity itself shall never be able to extinguish.

This first promise of the gospel, like the natural dawn, unfolded itself still more and more, through all the Old Testament dispen-

benighted situation, and were enabled to come out of the dark howling wilderness of sin, from the snares of Pagan and Romish superstition, and made to walk in the way everlasting, Psalm cxxxix. 24. ; and since to us, their children, the light of the glorious gospel still shineth in our land, how ought we to rejoice in God our Saviour, who "hath broken down the middle wall of partition," Eph. ii. 14. and, as well as the Jews, hath visited the Gentiles with salvation.

For my part, I desire to sing with the sweet Psalmist of Israel, that "the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places," Psalm xvi. 6. ; May I walk in the light of his countenance, Psalm lxxxix. 15. while here, and at length enter into that "city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. xi. 10. ; where there is "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God" doth "lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it," Rev. xxi. 23, 24.

He, whose star conducted the wise men of the east to the humble place of his birth,



Matt. ii. 2. 9, 10. still "holdeth the seven  
"stars in his right hand," Rev. ii. 1. ministers  
of the everlasting gospel, to direct those who  
are made wise to salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15.;  
not only in the east, but in north, south,  
east, and west, to that city of habitation,  
Psalm cvii. 3. 7., his kingdom of glory:  
May I follow their light, in so far as they  
are enlightened by the glorious Sun of right-  
eousness, until at length I enjoy his beams  
in that land of bliss, where "the inhabi-  
"tant shall not say, I am sick, and the peo-  
"ple that dwell therein shall be forgiven  
"their iniquity," Isa. xxxiii. 24., and reap  
that endless harvest of light and gladness,  
which is sown for the righteous and the up-  
right in heart, Psalm xcvii. 11. in the spring-  
time of grace, in the field of the everlasting  
gospel, by the good *Husbandman*, "the Fa-  
"ther of mercies and the God of all com-  
"fort," 2 Cor. i. 3.

Some of the inclosures into which it is  
divided, where this good seed is sown, are,  
the field of meditation and contemplation,  
the valley of prayer and praise, the green  
pastures of the Scriptures, and the mount of  
the preached gospel, with its verdant sum-

mit the Sacraments. In these delightful inclosures may I still delight to walk, that I may see the seed springing up with pleasure in the blade, and taste of the full corn in the ear; that, in the valley of death, I may begin to reap that harvest which, after I have passed the Jordan of dissolution, I shall reap and feast on fully in the heavenly Canaan.

But this I cannot do, unless He “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” shine in my heart, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6.; for, through the fall of man, gross darkness hath overspread the whole soul, so that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,” 1 Cor. ii. 14. And indeed it is impossible that he can, so long as his mind is in this state, discern the beauty of spiritual objects; any more than a man, during the darkness of the night, can discover the beauties of creation; till God, of his infinite mercy, vouchsafe to illuminate his mind by his Holy Spirit. It is then alone that he can discover the



vileness of his own heart, the deformity of sin, and the beauty of holiness.

But though light doth make manifest the deformities and beauties of objects in the natural world ; yet, without the rays and salutary beams of the sun, nothing is cherished or brought forward to perfection.

In like manner, though a sinner may be so far enlightened, as to be convinced of the evil nature of sin, the hatefulness of his own heart, and the necessity of renewing grace ; yet, without the Sun of righteousness ariseth to him, with healing in his wings, he cannot be savingly converted ; nor any of the graces of the spirit in his soul made to spring up and flourish to eternal life. How much doth it then concern me to examine whether I have experienced the dawn of spiritual things only, which consisteth merely in knowledge ; or the fructifying beams of the Sun of righteousness, making me spring and grow in grace !



## CONTEMPLATION II.

## ON THE SINGING OF A LARK.

WHAT pleasant sound is this salutes my ear so early ! While I listen, I perceive it is a Lark, newly sprung from the turf, where he had reposed during the darkness.

Anxious, as it were, to be the first of all the terrestrial creation in expressing its thankfulness to the great Creator, and upholder of all, for his kindness during the night, it pours forth its little, grateful soul, in rapturous strains of melody ; swelling the anthem of praise, with still more, and more, harmonious notes, the nearer it approaches the sky.

This delightful bird, above most of the feathered tribe, is truly worthy of my imitation, and that in various points of view. While I am ravished with its song, may I accord with the little charmer, in expressing

my gratitude to the bountiful Creator of all, which I am ten thousand times more bound to do than this cheerful songster.

How may I be put to shame with the early gratitude of this little creature, which enjoys so little in comparison of what I do, who am still so unthankful ! No house nor vault sheltered it from the hawk during the night ; while I slept in my house with doors shut against any who might molest either my person or goods.

It is now descended from its aerial excursion, and is silent for a little, gathering a scanty meal on yonder spot, but knows not where to find its next repast ; while I have provision, not only for sundry meals, but perhaps for some months. Led only by instinct, it gathers a few corns for the present ; while I have reason to direct me, not only how to provide for the present, but also for future wants. It enjoys but a short temporal life ; while I not only enjoy the same, but also hope to inherit life eternal.

No songster of the grove soars so high as the lark, and none sits lower. This is truly

picturesque of a saint, and teacheth me this excellent lesson, that the higher I arise in holiness and in likeness to God, the more humble I ought to be, calling myself, with the apostle of the Gentiles, "less than the least of all saints," Eph. iii. 8. Knowing that it is only grace that maketh me, or any, to differ from another, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

The lark has a long heel, which is one reason that it does not sit on the spray. So a believer, while he is here, hath a long heel, which keepeth him humble, even the iniquity of his heels, which compasseth him about, Ps. xlix. 5. The songsters of the grove will not sit on the ground, but perch on some elevated station, like the men of the world, who scorn the humble disposition of the saints, and sit high in their own estimation.

The lark will not assemble with any but those of its own tribe, except in case of winter's extremity; and even not then, unless for the purpose of gathering a little food.--- So a saint only findeth pleasure in the company of saints: these are they whom he maketh his companions, and in them he placeth all his delight, Ps. xvi. 2. And though he be of-



ten necessitated, from the affairs of human life, to associate with the men of the world, yet these may be said to have his actions only, but the saints his affections. To the former he will only impart the common occurrences of life; but to the latter, the things concerning his soul: with the one he associates through necessity, but with the other through real choice.

The lark, too, like a disconsolate mourner, for the loss of the pleasant seasons, gives up with its song in winter, and assumes a chirping note; yet even then, it is remarkable for being as fat, if not fatter, than when it rejoiced in the cheerful morn of Spring. So a saint, when under spiritual clouds in the winter of desertion, hangeth by, as it were, his harp on the willows, Ps. cxxxvii. 2. and falleth a mourning instead of singing the sweet songs of Zion: yet even then, he may be growing inwardly, though outwardly he cannot perceive it; and may be as fat, and full of sap, as when he saw that his mountain stood strong, Ps. xxx. 7. For it is one thing to grow in sense and manifestations, and another thing to grow in faith and patience; and when his sun cometh from un-



der the cloud, shall have reason to sing with the Psalmist, "It was good for me that I was "afflicted;" and to say, "Lord, thou hast "done all things well," Ps. cxix. 71. Mark vii. 37.

The lark, too, as has been already observed, is not only the earliest songster, but is often heard by the nocturnal traveller, at small intervals through the summer night, making low harmonious notes. Just so, a saint doth not only praise his Maker early; but often, with the sweet singer of Israel, preventeth the dawning of the morning, Ps. cxix. 147. Yea, even at midnight riseth to give thanks unto him, Ps. cxix. 62. and meditateth on him in the watches of the night, Ps. lxiii. 6, Like David, he not only experienceth the loving kindness of the Lord by day, but his songs are also with him by night, Ps. xlii. 8.

The lark, too, has often been known, when flying from the rapacious hawk, to take shelter in the bosom of man. Just so a sinner, when the eyes of his understanding are enlightened by the Holy Spirit to see his wretched and undone state by nature; the condemning sentence of the law, and the

Now he opens the fold-door, and they rush out all over the dewy pasture.---There let me a while leave him with his fleecy charge, and take a view of the Church, which is, in Scripture, compared to a sheep-fold, John x. 16.; and of her Head, who hath taken to himself the amiable name and character of a Shepherd, Psalm xxiii. 1. John x. 14.

The Church, as it were, is set upon a hill, exposed to the view of all her enemies; but “the Lord, her shepherd, is a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst thereof,” Zech. ii. 5. so that no weapon that is formed against her, in the main, ever hath been, or shall be, able to prosper, Isa. liv. 17.

The shepherd of that fold, I was just now noticing, is a watchful shepherd; but in this respect our Lord excelleth all other shepherds, for he not only attendeth to the wants of his people early, but he keepeth them, night and day, lest any hurt them: nay, watcheth over them every moment, Isaiah xxvii. 8. “He that keepeth Israel slumbereth not nor sleepeth,” Psalm cxxi. 4. their

groans, cries, and prayers, are sweet bleedings in his ears, and to them he attendeth early in every time of need ; for he knoweth their voice, and they know his, John x. 4. 14. whether he speaketh to them in his promises or threatenings.

They that have the Lord for their shepherd, may well, with the sweet Psalmist of Israel, in rapturous strains of melody sing,  
“ I shall not want, for he maketh me to lie  
“ down in green pastures, and leadeth me  
“ by the still waters : my fainting soul he  
“ restoreth again, and leadeth me in the  
“ paths of righteousness for his name’s sake ;  
“ and by his rod and staff comforteth me ;  
“ so that though I walk through the dark  
“ valley of death, I will fear no evil : my  
“ head he anointeth with oil, and my cup  
“ runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
“ and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
“ for ever,” Psalm xxiii. 1.---5.

Is there some difficult marsh or cliff through which the sheep must pass ? then will the shepherd carry over the lambs, and take care that the ewes that are great with

such, go safely. In like manner, when the Lord's people enter into trials, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature, the Lord maketh himself known to them by his name JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, "the Lord is there," Ezek. xlviii. 35. He is there to guide them safely through every difficulty; for he will carry the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young, Isa. xl. 11. and none of his sheep shall ever be lost, either in the mire of sin, or among the rocks of despair.

The shepherd, ever attentive to his charge, sees when the wolf comes, and defends his flock from his attacks. So the Shepherd of Israel, with his all-penetrating eye, seeth every movement which Satan and a wicked world make against his people, and either defendeth them from their assaults altogether, or ordereth it so, that they shall not be finally overcome by them; therefore the flock need not fear, however feeble they be in themselves, for none is able to pluck them out of his hand, John x. 28, 29.

Are any of the sheep ever caught among thorns? then will the tender-hearted shep-



herd hasten to their assistance, cut the retarding twigs, and set the innocent captives at liberty. In like manner, when any of the Lord's flock are entangled with the cares of this world, ensnared with the riches and pleasures thereof; then will their compassionate shepherd cut these pernicious twigs; nay, often, in love to their souls, blast those riches, and mar those pleasures, which held back his people's affections from himself, so that they may set them on things above, renew their strength, go on their Christian journey, and feed on the green pastures of spiritual things, as before.

While I am thus in serious meditation, I begin to be disturbed by a clamorous noise, which seems to come from the farther side of the hill; methinks it is like the barking of dogs. Ah! now I perceive I am right; yonder they are with open mouth pursuing a number of the fleecy tribe.--- Oh! what will become of these innocent sheep, they will certainly soon be destroyed, for those cruel dogs are almost close at their heels: fie upon them! will none call them off? Yes, to my great joy I hear a voice threatening them, and calling them



back : It is the voice of the shepherd : I discover him standing on the top of the hill ; I now perceive those sheep have been straying in forbidden paths, which has occasioned the shepherd to use his dogs for bringing them back.

The wicked in scripture are called dogs, Psal. xxii. 16. Isa. lvi. 10, 11. Matt. vii. 6. Rev. xxii. 15. These the great Shepherd often useth in chastising his flock when they go astray, and in turning them back from forbidden paths ; as we see in the case of the rebellious Israelites, when they assayed to go up into the land of Canaan, contrary to the command of the Lord and his servant Moses ; the Amalekites and Canaanites came down, fought against them, and turned them back, Num. xiv. 40---45. Also, when the flock of Israel in the land of Canaan went astray after idol gods, feeding on high places and under every green tree, contrary to the will of the great Shepherd, he sent against them Nebuchadnezzar with the Chaldeans, who like dogs did hunt them so severely, that they were driven away out of their own land for the space of seventy years : And this woeful hunting had

such a blessed effect upon them, that they were never known to stray in such paths afterwards. The wicked in no age of the church could ever run one step against the flock of God, till they were either ordered or permitted by the great Shepherd ; which indeed he hath often done for the best of purposes, but hath always stayed such dogs, and called them off in his own due time ; so that they have never yet devoured, nor shall ever be able to devour, any of his flock, though they may harass and terrify them much. When such dogs run with the open mouth of persecution against the people of the Lord, whether as individuals, or as a body, it is either for turning them back from forbidden paths, preventing them from going astray, recovering them from lukewarmness, trying their stedfastness in the faith, their zeal for the cause of Christ, keeping them humble, weaning their affections from the things of this life, or for some good end or other. A wise shepherd will not send his dogs upon the sheep wantonly ; much less will the good Shepherd of Israel, who laid down his life for his sheep, John x. 15. suffer the wicked to persecute his people without having the best of reasons for so do-

ing ; therefore, when any of the flock of God are persecuted, slandered, or in any ways evil entreated, they ought to eye the great Shepherd standing on Mount Zion, ordering and over-ruling all for their good.

But now the shepherd appears to have lost some of his flock, for I behold him on the summit of the hill, running from one eminence to another, looking anxiously around him : Anon he descends the steep towards the place where I stand : but all on a sudden, with hasty steps, he turns aside the other way, round the corner of the hill, and is lost to my view. While I stand gazing the way which he ran, on the farther side of the hollow, at a great distance, I perceive him rising to my sight, up the side of a neighbouring mountain : With how much assiduous care does he seek the wanderer ? This putteth me in mind of that beautiful parable uttered by our Lord, “ What  
“ man of you, having an hundred sheep, if  
“ he lose one of them, doth not leave the  
“ ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go  
“ after that which is lost until he find it ?  
“ and when he hath found it, he layeth it  
“ on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he



“ cometh home, he calleth together his  
“ friends and neighbours, saying unto them,  
“ Rejoice with me, for I have found my  
“ sheep which was lost,” Luke xv. 4, 5, 6.  
As the parable itself is highly delightful, the  
inference which our Lord draweth from it is  
no less beautiful, and full of comfort to sin-  
ners: “ I say unto you, that likewise joy  
“ shall be in heaven over one sinner that re-  
“ penteth, more than over ninety and nine  
“ just persons which need no repentance,”  
ver. 7. When shepherds are so careful of  
their flocks, which are but dumb animals;  
and above all, when the great Shepherd, our  
Lord and Saviour, hath done so infinitely  
much for his people, his flock; nay, even  
laid down his own life for them, that they  
might be gathered from their wanderings,  
and brought to his fold above, and rejoiceth  
over the conversion of every sinner: What  
an awful reproof doth this reach to careless  
under-shepherds, ministers of the gospel,  
who are at little or no pains to keep their  
flocks together in the green pastures and way  
of holiness; neither to seek them back when  
they go astray in the way of the ungodly!  
Nay, on the contrary, often, by their errone-  
ous principles and loose examples, drive them

away, and scatter them in the cloudy and dark day, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. "As I live, saith  
"the Lord God, surely because my flock be-  
"came a prey, and my flock became meat to  
"every beast of the field, because there was  
"no shepherd, neither did my shepherds  
"search for my flock; but the shepherds fed  
"themselves and fed not my flock: There-  
"fore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the  
"Lord; thus saith the Lord God, behold I  
"am against the shepherds; and I will re-  
"quire my flock at their hands, and cause  
"them to cease from feeding the flock, nei-  
"ther shall the shepherds feed themselves  
"any more," Ezek. xxxiv. 8, 9, 10.

And, on the other hand, what an excellent lesson doth it teach those under-shepherds of care and diligence, not only to keep their flocks together, but to feed them with wholesome doctrine, and use all means in their power to bring them back to the good pastures, when they have gone astray on the mountains of sin and vanity. How ought not I also, who desire to be one of the sheep of Christ's pasture, to be careful in following the footsteps of the flock, feeding beside the shepherds tents, Cant. i. 8. in the green



pastures of his ordinances, delighting myself only in those things in which he would have me to take pleasure, being led and guided by him through life, so that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, 1 Pet. v. 4. I may be set among the sheep on his right hand, and received into his everlasting fold.

Now the shepherd is returned with his strayed sheep: Poor creature! it appears to have been in the mire, for it is all defiled; he is washing it at yonder rill; how compassionate he is! In like manner, the great Shepherd of Israel washeth every one of his flock, not only from the guilt of sin, in the fountain of his own blood, but also from the filth, the love and power thereof, in the laver of regeneration and sanctification of the Holy Ghost; so that their garments may be clean, and at last they may walk with him in white, Rev. iii. 4.

How pleasant is it to see the fleecy mothers suckling their little lambs! If the God of nature had not endowed them with that maternal care, their tender offspring would soon perish from the field, and the labour of the shepherd be lost. Just so the strong a-

mong Christ's flock ought to exercise an affectionate care towards those that are weak, by contributing all in their power to strengthen the feeble, cheer the drooping, and help the young in grace forward in the paths of religion. If it is not natural only, but absolutely necessary in the fleecy tribe, to suckle their young; it is certainly as much so for the Church to nourish her spiritual seed: If this be incumbent on those who are fathers in piety, strength, and experience; it is likewise the duty of these who are but as babes in knowledge and grace, to be imitating the lambs which suckle their mothers, by applying to those who have more knowledge and experience than themselves, for assistance and counsel in their Christian course, always "desiring the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2.

It is delightful to see these little lambs, this pleasant morning, alternately frisking sportively on the hill, and browsing on the tender sproutings of the grass, which are rendered still more soft and sweet by the balmy dew which lay upon them during the night. It is certainly incomparably more so, to see the young among the flock of Christ,

in the morning of youth, rejoicing in holiness, solacing themselves with spiritual food, having the dew of heaven lying all night upon their branches, Job xxix. 19.

Poor innocent lambs! the period is not far distant, when many of you will be led to the slaughter, nor will you repine at your fate. So the great Shepherd of his flock, for his people's sins, was led as a lamb to the slaughter, without the least repining at the will of his heavenly Father; and "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," Isa. liii. 7.

The shepherd robs the flock of its fleece in shearing-time, for the purpose of cloathing, not only himself, but also many others. But in this respect our Lord differeth from all other shepherds; for he, as it were, deprived himself for a time of his declarative glory for the good of his flock: when he, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, left the bosom of the Father, came to this earth, and that in the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 6. and wrought out a complete righteousness, a garment indeed without seam, to clothe his flock with; nay, even such a

garment that the thunderings and lightnings of mount Sinai cannot pierce through. Adam the first made all his posterity naked ; but the second man from heaven hath completely restored the covering.

The shepherd not only clothes himself with the fleece, but also in due time slays the animal itself, and feeds upon its carcase. But, to the wonder of angels, and the astonishment of men, our Shepherd laid down his life for his sheep, and that most willingly of himself, for no man took it from him ; that all his true flock might feed upon him, for " his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood " is drink indeed," John vi. 55.

The life of a shepherd is highly delightful during the spring and summer months ; he rejoices in his labour through the cheerful day, and in the night, like Jacob, dreams concerning his flock. If those seasons were always to last, such a life might almost be deemed free from that curse of toil which was inflicted on man for his disobedience : but this will not be the case ; these must end, and the dreary winter approach with her stern short day, and long bleak night, turn-



ing the earth as it were into iron, and covering these green pastures and every neighbouring hill deep over with snow. Then will the shepherd's life be changed from a life of pleasure to a life of toil. In the morning from his cot, shivering he will ascend the hill, scarcely knowing where to find his sheep; and when he has found them, where to feed them: Nay, on the stormiest side of the hill must his station often be, there to keep his flock from falling down to the hollows, and being drifted over with snow, and so perish.

So Christ, the great Shepherd of his sheep, did not only lead and feed his flock, in that joyful season, when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, while many spread their garments in the way, and others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way, and Hosannas in the highest were sung, Mark xi. 8, 9. but also in that awful winter, when the malice of men and devils were let loose against him, and like a furious storm raged full in his face. A storm yet still more dreadful and tremendous than this he bare for his flock, even the infinite wrath of Almighty God, which would have swept them all down to hell, and there overwhelm-



ed them through all eternity, if he had not borne it for them : But this he did ; and the tempest was so infinitely fierce, that it laid him flat on the ground, filled his soul with agony, and made him to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, Luke xxii. 44. Nay, so terrible was the blast, that on the cross it made him to cry out, “ My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? ” Matt. xxvii. 46. but at length he cried out, “ It is finished ! ” (the horrible tempest which his flock otherwise should have borne was all spent upon him) he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost ! John xix. 30.

“ Bless the Lord, then, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,” Psal. ciii. 2. Let all his flock on earth join with those in heaven, saying, “ Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory, and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” Rev. i. 5, 6.

## CONTEMPLATION IV.

## ON THE SUN.

YONDER comes the glorious king of day, in stately steps of majesty, from his chambers in the east, like a bridegroom, as the Psalmist beautifully describes him, or "as a strong man rejoicing to run his race," Psal. xix. 5. Dame Nature, glad at his approach, welcomes his return with a cheerful countenance, and spreads wide her blooming arms to receive his salutary embraces, and dries up the dewy tears from her lovely cheek, which she had shed in his absence during the night, and now smiles pleasantly around. From the time he returns to her with his lengthened day at the vernal equinox, his fructifying beams make her prolific, till he again in Autumn retires beyond the line, to perform his winter's journeys: then she becomes barren, unless through her laxeness a few untimely births appear in our fields and gardens: I except the snow-drop

and crocas, these stated harbingers of spring.

And is all creation, both animate and inanimate, glad at the rising of the sun? What infinitely more reason hath the new creation, even all true believers, to rejoice, when to them the Sun of righteousness ariseth with healing under his wings?

When that sun arose, I beheld the mists of the morning dispelled from the hills, and all the sky become clear. In like manner, when the Sun of righteousness sheddeth forth his benign beams in the heart of sinners, the mists which Satan raised there quickly evanish, and all the soul becometh clear and serene. The joy which the believer experienceth in such a season, who hath been long under the hidings of God's countenance, is only known to himself, and cannot fully be described.

When the sun arises, the royal Psalmist tells us, "The beasts of prey gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens: and man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the even-

“ing,” Psal. civ. 22, 23. So when the Sun of righteousness shineth into the heart of a sinner, Satan, who is compared to a roaring lion, that goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. v. 8. (and greatly doeth so in the sad night of desertion) is compelled by his cheering beams, to withdraw from the poor soul, with unbelief, hard thoughts of God, and despair, which are incomparably more cruel than beasts of prey: and the man goeth to work the works of God, even to “believe in Christ Jesus whom he hath sent,” John vi. 28, 29, “whom to know is life eternal,” John xvii. 3.

When the sun arises, men see clearly around them, and every object appears in its native dye. In like manner, when the Sun of righteousness ariseth on the soul of a sinner, the eyes of the understanding are enlightened to behold sin in its proper colours; that it is highly offensive to God, and that which he abhors only; truly hateful in itself, and eternally destructive in its consequences; also the justice of God, the purity of the law, and man’s utter inability to keep it; his lost and undone state by



nature, and the remedy which God hath provided for him, namely, the blood and surety righteousness of Christ, who is not only a sun to enlighten, warm, and cherish, but also a shield of protection from the wrath of God, and defence against all his enemies, who will "give grace and glory, "and no good thing will he withhold "from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

By the beams of the sun the earth is made warm, and she, like a tender mother, nourishes the infant spring; the grass and herbs grow up together; and the daisies of the field, with the rest of the early flowers, look forth with a feeble, yet pleasing countenance, declaring the winter is past. So, by the salutary beams of the Sun of righteousness, the affections are warmed with gratitude to God, and all the graces of the Spirit grow up and flourish; and faith and hope, in lively exercise, shew the sad winter of desertion is over.

It is by the light of the sun alone that man can see that glorious luminary; so it is only by the light which the Sun of righ-



teousness imparteth, that the sinner can see HIM: All that reason which is so much boasted of, which even the wisest philosophers among the heathen possessed, of itself is as unavailing to discover him, and the way of salvation through him, as the light of a candle would be to discover the natural sun.

Though I enjoy the light, and feel the warming beams of that sun, this pleasant morning, yet millions do so as well as I, and yet my enjoyment of him is nothing impaired thereby; for I have as much of his benign influence as if there were not another man on the earth but myself. In like manner, though the Sun of righteousness shine upon all true believers, yet every individual among them enjoyeth him to that degree, as if it had been for him alone he left the bosom of the Father, came to earth, obeyed the law, suffered the wrath and curse of God, died on the cross, arose again, and ascended up into heaven.

What a glorious object is the sun, and how immensely great! a body of fire sup-

posed to be no less than eight hundred thousand times larger than the earth, must needs surpass the proud monarch of Babylon's fiery furnace inconceivably more than that furnace did the transient spark smitten from the flint by the steel. How infinitely great must that Power be who made and sustains that globe in ether! Nor is his wisdom and goodness less conspicuous in poising it at such a convenient distance from the earth, so that, instead of men and things being burnt up by it, they are only warmed and cherished thereby. But how infinitely more doth the goodness of God appear to man, in that when he had sinned and rendered himself obnoxious to divine justice, God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved, John iii. 17.

The sun is the most useful and most delightful of all inanimate creatures, the best emblem (as one observeth) of his Creator which we here behold. No wonder if the poor blind heathen mistook him for his Maker, and paid that worship to this luminary which was due to him alone.

But for what do we love the sun most? Is it because of that resplendency that he is possessed of? or is it not rather on account of the benefits we derive from his cheering rays and fructifying beams? But far otherwise is it with respect to the Sun of righteousness; his people love him more on account of what he is, in and of himself, and what he hath done for them, than for all the good things he hath purchased for them, nay, than for heaven itself. I will not indeed say that this is always the case upon a person's immediately closing with Christ; for like as one who findeth himself inevitably perishing in a mighty flood, ready every moment to be overwhelmed in the impetuous surge, will cry vehemently out for help, and, when a rope is thrown in for his delivery, self-preservation maketh him eagerly grasp the same; but no sooner doth he find himself escaped the danger, than he contemplateth with love the benevolent hand that preserved his life. So the shipwrecked sinner in Adam, when he seeth himself perishing in a sea of wrath, ready to be swallowed up in the inexorable billows of divine justice, will be apt, like a woman in pangs, to cry out



with the jailor of Phillippi, "What must I do to be saved?" And when by the hand of power a cord of mercy is let down for his delivery, with a "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" will he not eagerly take hold of it, and hold for life? But no sooner doth he see his interest in Christ, than he loveth him mainly because of his own excellency, and what he hath done for him, even far more than on account of the good things he hath purchased for him. Indeed if our love to Christ rise no higher than for the benefits he hath procured for us, it is only specious self-love springing from a false faith, and that which will stand the soul in no more stead than those fine words and fair pretensions did to them who thought to impose upon our Saviour, by saying, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" to whom our Lord replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled," John vi. 25, 26.

As the natural sun has opposite effects upon different bodies, by softening some, such as the wax, and hardening others, as

that of the clay ; yet is this hardening effect not to be attributed to the sun, but to the nature of the clay upon which it shines : So the Sun of righteousness proveth the savour of life unto life to some, but that of death unto death to others. Some sinners are melted under the preaching of the gospel, while others become more hardened thereby ; nor is this hardening owing to any fault in this Sun, who from unrighteousness is altogether free, Psal. xcii. 15. but totally to their own depravity and unbelief. True, indeed, by the fall of Adam, all men are naturally alike, but the nature of the elect being renewed, is the alone cause why these receive gracious impressions, while others do not.

Where the sun-beams directly shine, the eye beholds it full of motes, though before there appeared none. In like manner, when the Sun of righteousness shineth into the heart of a sinner, the man seeth what he never thought of before, even his whole inward part, as well as the outward, to be full of sin and filthiness.

In the rays of the sun the rainbow is seen, that token of the covenant which God made



of not destroying the earth any more by a flood of water : So in the rays of the Sun of righteousness, the believer beholdeth a token of that covenant of grace which God made with his Son Christ, in the elect's name, that he would not destroy them with the flood of wrath for his sake.

The sun in the firmament is unchangeable and constant ; every morning he arises and performs his course from east to west, shining forth for the benefit of all the terrestrial creation, though his benign beams are often obscured from the earth by reason of intervening clouds. With respect to immutability, the Sun of righteousness incomparably excelleth, for he is eternally unchangeable ; he still shineth forth in the firmament of his grace, for the good of all his elected ones, although his cheering beams may often be obscured from the soul by reason of sin, which like intercepting clouds prevent them from having this comfort : Yet let such solace themselves by viewing the Sun of righteousness with the eye of faith, as still shining for their good in the firmament of his grace, though the eye of sense may not behold him, still hoping and waiting for a

brighter day, when their sky shall be cleared, and they enjoy again his gladdening beams.

The naked eye cannot directly look the sun in the face, without much danger of being hurt (unless in some secondary way) his lustre is so great. In like manner, sinful man, made naked by the fall, cannot look directly in the face of the Sun of righteousness, as he is one in essence with the Father and Spirit, the infinitely holy, just, and pure, dreadful, almighty Jehovah, without great danger of eternal destruction, unless in and through the Mediatorship of Christ Jesus; and so through his human nature behold his divine; for, to the sinner who is out of Christ, God is a "consuming fire," Deut. iv. 24. Heb. xii. 29.

The sun never takes the traveller at a disadvantage, but gives him timely warning of his going down, by his cooling the evening, and making the shadows long; so that if he be benighted and lie in the fields, he has only himself to blame. In like manner, the Sun of righteousness giveth a warning to those who travel Zion-ward, in pro-

fession only, of his total withdrawment from them, by his leaving them to a coldness and carelessness about the things of God, and to delight in the shadows more than in the substance of religion ; so that with the rest of the reprobate they have only themselves to blame for being eternally benighted. How then ought not those who observe such signs of his withdrawment, whether as individuals, or a particular church, Joshua like, to pray that this sun may stand still, and if they pray in faith, like Joshua they shall be heard, Josh. x. 12. 13.

When the sun goes down, darkness does not immediately ensue ; but though the light is protracted for a little, yet are there not the smallest hopes of his rising again that day ; no, for it is ended.

In the twilight which is quickly lost, in the blackness of the night, the votaries of lewdness walk forth, as well as the beasts of the forest, to hunt for their prey. So the Sun of righteousness may end the day of grace, and I doubt not, often doeth, before the day of a sinner's life ; but where there



is the smallest hope of being again blest with his beams, or the least desire after this, it is a sign the case is not desperate: the Sun of righteousness as to them is not totally gone down; for the Lord is good to them that seek him, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; for he satisfieth the longing soul---will be found of them that seek him, and accomplish the desire of them that fear him; at evening time it shall be light, Lam. iii. 25. Psal. xxxiii. 18. Psal. cvii. 9. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Jer. xxix. 13, 14. Matt. vii. 7. Psal. cxlv. 19. Zech. xiv. 7. "Thou hast ravished my heart "with one of thine eyes, with one chain of "thy neck," saith Christ, Cant. iv. 9. But, on the contrary, when sinners have not the smallest hope of, nor the least desire of seeing and being blest with his beams again, after having been once enlightened by him, and tasted of the powers of the world to come, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. It is a certain sign to them that their day of grace is ended. In this twilight of mercy, as it were, which is protracted to them for a time, they indulge their lusts with freedom, and the wild



beasts of error and corruption walk through their soul without restraint, and make a prey of any good that was there remaining; till at length they are enveloped in the horrible darkness of eternal night, misery, and woe.

## CONTEMPLATION V.

## ON PLOUGHING.

YONDER rustic swain, somewhat aged,  
driving his lusty team out to plough, cal-  
leth to my remembrance Adam driven from  
the garden, and sent to till the ground,  
which was cursed for his sake; and happy  
had it been for his hapless posterity had  
that been all; but alas! by his rebellion he  
and they were all laid under the eternal  
wrath and curse of God, which rendered  
their hearts more hard and barren than that  
of the ground.

This man is now got to his labour, and  
a painful one it is, but there is no help for  
it, bread cannot be obtained without it; man  
was to eat bread in the sweat of his face un-  
til he returned into the ground, for out of it  
was he taken, Gen. iii. 19.

By this man's appearance, I judge he is only a servant to some neighbouring husbandman, but a very faithful one: what pains he is taking in breaking the stubborn glebe! now he lets the plough lightly in, making the furrow shallow, because the soil requires it; again he sets her deeper, because the soil will bear it. So the law of God, as a servant to the great Husbandman, is faithful to his trust, in dealing with hardened sinners: in some, as it were, it plougheth by means of the word, with a less sharp coulter of conviction, and lighter sock of contrition than in others; some, according as the great Husbandman in his infinite wisdom hath seen it necessary.

This ploughman, I observe, is very attentive that he miss none of the ground, but till it all as he goes along. So the law, in ploughing the fallow ground of a sinner's heart, breaketh it all up, not the smallest green balk of self-confidence is left unturned over.

I perceive this man with his plough turns up large quantities of filthy noxious weeds, and poisonous roots, which before lay un-

discovered in the heart of the earth. In like manner, the law by its ploughing turneth up large quantities of vile weeds of corruption, and bitter roots of sin, that lay deep hid in the sinner's heart before, which till then he could never properly discover, but now he seeth them all clearly, and they are truly loathsome to his view ; whereas he thought himself " rich, and encreased with goods, " having need of nothing ; " now he knoweth himself to be only " wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17., all filthy, and obnoxious to divine wrath.

This heath, in its uncultivated state, was good for nothing but casting for fuel : the wild fowls hatched in it ; there the poisonous adder and snake lay basking themselves in the sun, without being disturbed, while the wild beasts pastured upon it at their pleasure ; thus it was unfit to bear corn for the master's use ; but now that the plough has entered, it is a favourable sign, the owner designs it for that good purpose. In like manner, before the fallow ground of the sinner's heart began to be cultivated, it was good for nothing but to be cast into eternal



fire, to manifest the justice of God : wild, blasphemous sinful thoughts were hatched in it ; there the old serpent, as it were, lay basking himself, and the wild beasts of error and corruption ranged with freedom : in this state it was wholly unfit for being sown with the good seed, and bringing forth fruit unto eternal life ; but when once the law hath begun to break it up by ploughing, as it were, therein, it is a favourable symptom that the great Husbandman meaneth to cultivate it thoroughly, and that it shall “ become as a “ field which the Lord will bless,” Gen. xxvii. 27.

This ground, now being tilled, wears a very different aspect to what it did but a little ago ; then it was all one firm fair turf ; now, through ploughing and cross-ploughing, it is quite mashed, confused, and black, and nothing in it can give pleasure to the eye. Just so that heart where the law hath been working formeth a very opposite prospect in the man’s eye to what it formerly did ; then it was all one whole, hard, uncultivated lump, and nothing in it that gave much disgust to the sinner himself ; but now since that fallow ground hath been broken

by the law, all mangled, and, as it were, torn in pieces, and the proper soil turned up, it appeareth full of confusion and deceit, loathsome and black as hell.

While attending this plough, I observe a kind of low groaning, formed betwixt the oppressed plough, and the harness of the team as it turns up the earth. In like manner, while the law is ploughing and turning up the corrupt natural soil of the sinner's heart, how doth he groan ! longing to be delivered from the grieving yoke.

But though this barren heath which I now behold, be all ploughed and cross-tilled, yet if it be not sown and further cultivated, the weeds and poisonous plants will again take faster root, and grow more numerous than before, and it will in a very short time return to its former uncultivated state. So though the fallow ground of a sinner's heart have been broken up by the law, and the vile weeds of corruption, and bitter poisonous roots of sin turned up and loosened, yet if it be not sown with the good seed, and farther cultivated by the Holy Ghost, those weeds and poisonous bitter roots will take faster hold of the ac-

cursed soil, and spring up more vile and numerous than ever, and very soon will it become as barren and hard as before, if not a great deal harder.

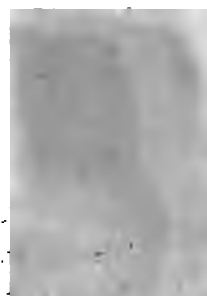
As the farmer may plough some of his ground, and yet, for reasons known to himself, leave it unsown; so the great Husbandman may, and we cannot doubt but often doth, cause a law-work to take place in many hearts, which for wise reasons he never soweth with the good seed. How careful then ought I to be in examining myself, whether this law-work have taken place in my heart! and if my fallow ground have thus been ploughed and broken up! if the Husbandman have ended his work with me there, or have cultivated my heart as a field for his own use, by sowing in it the good seed.

The husbandman fallows some of his ground, lets it rest a while; then fallows it over again, and lets it remain a while longer undisturbed, then ploughs it over and over again, till it become fit for being sown. So the great Husbandman falloweth the heart of some sinners with the law, then abateth the work for some time, then reneweth it again,

and so again and again, till it become fit for being sown with the good seed.

The husbandman, too, ploughs some of his ground early in the spring, other some of it when it is pretty far advanced, and some of it nigh the latter end of the year. So the great Husbandman breaketh up the fallow ground of some in youth, of others in more advanced years, and of other some at the eleventh hour, when the season of life is well nigh ended, according as he in his infinite wisdom seeth best, "and none can stay his hand, or say "unto him, What doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35,







## CONTEMPLATION VI.

### ON SOWING.

“ While through the neighb’ring fields the sower stalks  
“ With measur’d steps, and lib’ral throws the grain \*.”

THUS sung our Scottish bard, and this I  
verified behold: While o’er yon fur-  
rowed land the husbandman, with care-  
ful steps and slow, in handfuls from his  
sheet, by damsel fair supplied from yonder

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\* Thomson.

sack, sows wide in hope the wholesome grain, and distributes to every ridge its just proportion.

The crows fly round, and view with eager eyes the tempting corn white covering all the field, descend by stealth, and peck, till once the harrows come and disappoint them all.

As this man is joyful in sowing his grain in the earth, so the great Husbandman, with infinitely more joy, soweth the seed of grace in the heart of a sinner; for he rejoiceth over his elect to do them good, Jer. xxxii. 41.

This husbandman, I observe, uses his servants in carrying the seed to the ground, but he sows it there himself. So the great Husbandman useth his servants, the ministers of the gospel, for carrying the seed of the word to the ears of sinners, but he soweth it in the ground of their hearts himself by the Holy Spirit.

|| | This man, I observe, is careful in sowing, that he miss none of the ground with

the seed, and gives to every ridge its just proportion. With infinitely more care doth the great Husbandman sow the good seed in the heart; no place of it is missed; every faculty of the soul receiveth a proper measure of it: the understanding is not enlightened and the will left unrenewed; nor the conscience made tender, and void of offences, while the memory is unsanctified, and the affections cold: No, all are sown with the good seed, which will grow up in due time to perfection.

I observe the harrows following the husbandman, and covering up the seed; if this were not done, very soon would it be snatched from the earth by the fowls of the air. In like manner, the good seed of the word must be as it were covered up, and hid deep in the heart, lest the foul fiend Satan come and catch it out: thus did the Royal Psalmist: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart," saith he, "that I might not sin against thee," Psalm cxix. 11.

From this ground, which is now harrowed over, I behold large quantities of weeds gathered together, with a number of stones,



viour so dear : if so, I may conclude I am certainly sown with the good seed, which will never perish, but spring up to eternal life, John iv. 14.

## CONTEMPLATION VII.

## ON A FIELD OF SPRINGING CORN.

WHAT a delightful prospect is here ! the joy of the husbandman and hope of the poor ; even a field of springing corn.

Truly grateful to the eye is the blade newly come from the teeming earth, the sight of which inspires with gratitude, and creates throughout all the soul a pleasant sensation.

Best of vegetables, and staff of life ! my contemplations be on thee.---As it is delightful to behold this corn in the blade, growing up to perfection under the influence of the natural heavens : It is certainly still more so to feel and see the seeds of grace springing

up in the heart and life, under the influence of the God of heaven.

As showers of rain are necessary to refresh, cherish, and promote the growth of the blade ; so are the showers of blessing, which come down in the ordinances of God's grace, absolutely necessary for cherishing and promoting the growth of the good seed.

After a long drought, how does the husbandman rejoice at the appearance of rain, when he sees it come down on the blade ? then it is, to use the language of the Psalmist, " the vallies shout for joy, they also " sing," Psalm lxxv. 13. And is the husbandman so glad at the showers of temporal blessing, and do the vallies themselves thus rejoice ? Far more so do those hearts which are sown with the good seed (in the dry and parched land of the world wherein there is no water, Psalm lxxiii. 1.) at the showers of spiritual blessings : then indeed these thirsty vallies shout and sing for joy in the ordinances which the great Husbandman maketh use of to water them with, and he himself rejoiceth at their good.

The seed does not lie long hid in the earth, but soon springs up to view. In like manner, the good seed will not lie long hid in that heart where it is sown, but soon appear in the man or woman's life and conversation.

I observe in some places of this field the blade farther advanced than in other some; here it is pretty long, there it is just but coming through the mould; and this is not owing to any fault in the seed, but to the difference of the soil. Just so is it in respect to the infant state of grace in the heart: in some of the faculties of the soul, for a time, it is more readily observed by the believer himself, than in other some; as for instance, it may more easily be perceived in the will, conscience, and affections, than in the understanding and memory; and this is not owing to any fault in the good seed itself, but wholly to the soil where it is sown; for that mind which before was very ignorant, and had but a small speculative knowledge of the matters of religion, and that memory which is naturally very weak; enlightening and sanctifying grace will not so soon be observed in them as in that under-



standing and memory, which formerly were more naturally enlightened with a greater degree of speculative knowledge in these things, and more retentive.

But, in another part of this field, I observe the blade has been pretty far advanced, even much farther than any where else, but is now going back again and withering away. Ah! this is the stony ground which our Lord telleth us of in the parable, where the seed sprang up quickly, and because it had not much root, when the sun arose it withered. Hear the beautiful inference which he maketh: " But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself; but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by he is offended," Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

At the end of this ridge grow a few pernicious thorns, among which I perceive some of the seed has fallen, for there is some of the blade springing up; this too will be soon choked and rendered unfruit-

ful, by these destructive neighbours among which it is involved, agreeably to our Lord and Saviour's description in the above parable. Note the striking inference: "He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful," Matt. xiii. 22.

As for those seeds which the husbandman let fall by the way-side when coming hither to sow, they are no doubt picked up by the fowls some time ago; but the inference which our Lord maketh of this part of the parable still abideth for our instruction. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he which received seed by the way-side," Matt. xiii. 19.

This good ground, which may be expected to bring forth an hundred-fold, must be carefully kept from the inroads of beasts, otherwise the crop will be much injured, if not wholly destroyed. But how shall this

field be preserved from such ravages? for I perceive it hath no sufficient fence around it. No doubt the husbandman will take care of it, and tend it with his herdsmen from such intrusions. So the field of the heart must be carefully kept from the inroads of sin and Satan, else these worse than beasts of prey will soon destroy the crop of grace, and leave nothing against the harvest but a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11.

But how must this field of the heart be kept from such destruction? for the fence thereof was quite broken down in paradise, by Adam's going over it to eat the forbidden fruit. The hedge of original righteousness being now no more round this field, how shall it be preserved? But difficult as the task is, nay, though altogether out of our power, we are commanded to do it, and that with all diligence, Prov. iv. 23. for the fence was entirely of man's own breaking down, and he thereby put it out of his power to keep it, though bound thereto in the covenant of works. But although he lost his ability to obey, God did not lose his right to command whatsoever he was bound



to, and endowed with ability for before the fall.

But the question still recurs, How shall the field of the heart be kept? The answer is, By giving it into the care of the great Husbandman, who hath said, "My son, "give me thine heart," Prov. xxiii. 26. If this field then be given to his protection, it shall be kept indeed, lest any hurt it; he will keep it night and day, Isa. xxvii. 3.

When this field is well advanced towards the harvest, and every stalk in it loaden with full ears, tinged with yellow, forming a delightful prospect of a luxuriant crop; perhaps the clouds, tremendous clouds, will gather, and burst forth in alarming falls of rain, with boisterous winds, which shall lay it down along the surface of the earth: then will it look solitary, but as it holds fast by the roots, when the rains are over, the sky clear, and the sun broken forth with his radiant beams, it will begin to change its sad appearance, and in time resume its former gaiety, look up and stand erect, waving its head in the sunny beams as before. So the believer, when he is growing up as the



planting of the Lord, bringing forth the fruits of grace and holiness, a comfort to himself and all around him, concluding, with the Psalmist, that his mountain standeth strong, and he shall not be moved, Psalm xxx. 6, 7. perhaps for wise ends the Lord seeth best to darken his sky, and shower down upon him heavy crosses, which, with adverse providences blowing full in his face, will lay him low in humility and self-abasement: then will he mourn, saying with Job, "O! that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon mine head!" Job xxix, 2, 3.; but as he holdeth fast by the foundation, being rooted and grounded in Christ, though he be thus laid low, his sky will again clear, and his mourning be turned into joy; the Sun of righteousness shall again break forth, and arise to him with healing in his wings, Mal. iv. 2. and he shall resume his former comfort, and grow up and flourish in the courts of the Lord, Psalm xcii. 13.

Dark weather impregnates the ears as well as sun shine, though it be not so good for whitening them over for harvest. In like manner, spiritual darkness impregnates

the believer with stronger desires after the light of God's countenance, clearer views of his interest in Christ, and faith in lively exercise ; so that he maketh, if I may use the expression, desperate efforts to believe ; saying with Job, " Though he slay me, I " will trust in him," Job xiii. 15. wrestling like Jacob till the dawning of the day, saying, " I will not let thee go except thou " bless me," Gen. xxxii. 24. 26. praying with David, that the Lord would make his face to shine upon him, Psa. xxxi. 16. The strength of the mariner's anchor is best proved in a storm : so is the strength of faith in time of desertion. Many an anchor that will hold the ship in calm weather, becomes as useless for that purpose as a straw in time of a heavy gale.

The young man in the gospel, who had his anchor fixed to a rope of his own making, thought it sufficient to hold his vessel against wind and tide, when he was for setting out to sail after our Lord, when lo ! it went all to pieces at the very appearance of a tempest, and we never hear that he undertook the voyage any more, Matt. xix. 16.---22.

Even Peter's, too, held very fast about the edges of the brook Kedron, but dragged shamefully, and had almost gone in pieces in the high priest's hall. So we see the best way of knowing the weakness or strength of the anchor of faith, is not by examining how it holdeth in still weather, but in a tempest.

But how have I made this sudden excursion from the land to the ocean ! Let me return again a while longer to contemplate this field, which in a few months will be loaden with full ears, white over for harvest, inviting the husbandman to thrust in his sickle, and reap it for himself : With joy then will he do so, and, after he has left the sheaves a little to deaden in the field, with gladness will gather them home to his barns. So the believer, when he is fully ripe for heaven, the great Husbandman will thrust in the sickle of death, and reap him for himself : then shall he come to his grave in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in his season, Job v. 26.

And as the corn is left in the field a little to deaden ; so will he, with respect to his bo-



dy, be left to corrupt in the grave till the resurrection of the just, when the great Husbandman will house both soul and body in his heavenly garner for ever and ever.

It certainly now concerneth me to know whether the good seed have been sown in my heart, and to comply with the apostle's injunction, which is, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates," 2 Cor. xiii. 5. To begin then:

Good seed is never sown but in broken cultured ground. Hath my heart then been made broken, contrite, and humble, on account of the sin of my nature, as well as that of my life? Have I ever seen myself in the deplorable case of that infant described in the prophecies of Ezekiel, with my navel uncut, original sin hanging about me; not washed in the laver of regeneration to supple me from the stiffness of that rebellion, and cleanse me from its guilt; nor salted at all, nor swaddled at all, with purifying, renewing, preserving and strengthening grace;



cast forth in the open field of the world, to the loathing of my person, devoid of any shelter to cover me from the wrath of God ; without any eye to pity, or a hand to do any of these things to me. And while I was thus polluted in my blood, did I experience the Lord's spreading his skirt over me ? covering my nakedness, interesting me in the righteousness of his Son Jesus Christ, and taking me into covenant with himself through him ? Then I may say my time was the time of love, Ezekiel xvi. 4, 5, 6, 8.

Secondly, where corn is sown it renews the face of that part of the earth, agreeably to Psalm civ. 30. Now, have I felt myself renewed in the whole man after the image of God ? Is my understanding, which before was dark, now enlightened in the knowledge of Jesus Christ ? Doth my will, which made choice of the things which were contrary to God's will, now choose those that are agreeable to it ? Are my affections, which formerly were placed on this earth and carnal things, now set on heaven and spiritual enjoyments ? Is my conscience, which in times past was seared as it were with a hot iron, 1 Tim. iv. 2., now faithful to its

trust, quick in admonishing me of what is wrong, and sanctioning what is right? And my memory, that before was treacherous to that which is good, and retentive of evil, now made to delight in recording the doings of the Lord, and the things that make for his glory? Doth my tongue, which before was given to delight in vain and idle discourse, now take pleasure in extolling its Creator, recommending him to others, and speaking on profitable subjects? Do my ears, that were wont to delight with the Athenians, Acts xvii. 21., in hearing new and idle tales, and things that pleased the flesh; receive no satisfaction, but in hearing those things which are glorifying to God, and profiting to the soul? Do my eyes, that used to solace themselves in gazing on the pomp and vanities of this world, now take pleasure in looking into the word of God, as revealed in the Scriptures? Are my hands, instead of being engaged in unlawful works, now employed in honest labours, and in ministering to the necessities of the poor saints, and supplying the wants of the needy; according to the ability God hath given me? And are my feet, which were swift in running to mischief, and walking in for-



bidden paths, carrying me after vanities, now directed to noble purposes, entirely opposite to those, even to carry me to the house and ordinances of God, and upon errands to do good to my fellow men, set and made to walk in the ways of righteousness.

Thirdly, a field of corn, in time of a drought, wears a languid appearance, but greatly revives when the showers descend; then, in the language of the king of Israel, that great contemplator of the works of God, "The valleys shout! they also sing," as was formerly observed. Now, have I felt disagreeable, when, through some means or other I have been kept back from the ordinances of God, and longed with the sweet singer of Israel, vehemently to enjoy again these privileges; saying, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is,—to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary," Psal. lxiii. 1, 2.

And when I have been restored to these privileges again, can I, in the sight and hear-

ing of the searcher of hearts, sing with David, "I was glad when they said unto me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord," Psal. cxxii. 1., and "I have rejoiced in the "way of thy testimonies, as much as in all "riches," Psal. cxix. 14., and "thy testimonies also are my delight," Psal. cxix. 24.

Fourthly, where a field of corn is, care is taken to preserve it from the ravages of beasts. Now, have I been taking care to preserve my heart from the ravages of sin and Satan? Am I careful to guard and keep out of it every dishonouring thought of God and his law? every inclination to sin? every high thought of myself, with respect to my own spiritual abilities? every revengeful wish against any that may have offended me; and, in short, every thing that is contrary to the will of God.

Now, if I can call God to witness, that I have had, or have all, or any of these evidences in reality, it is a sign that the good seed hath been sown in my heart: and to prove that it hath not fallen upon stony ground, neither among thorns, with respect to me, let me persevere to the end, and root



out every worldly care that may in the least mar the growth of the seed, not in my own strength, but in that of the great Husbandman, who hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9.



## CONTEMPLATION VIII.

ON A WOOD.

THIS wood forms an agreeable prospect, all the trees and shrubs of which begin to be attired in native green, budding forth with a pleasant scent, while almost every spray is made vocal with musicians of gay plumage, and the cuckoo just arrived, repeats her name

from bough to bough ; swains at a distance catch the gladsome sounds, listen again, and tell their neighbours they have heard the voice of the welcome visitant ; all which invite my steps through its recesses, and what can be more pleasant than to have the sight, smelling, and hearing, all regaled at the same time, while the mind finds ample scope for contemplation ?

While I walk through the glades, I behold trees and shrubs of various kinds, divers growths, and for different uses. Here I have a picture of the world, and may see with the blind man in the gospel, when partly enlightened, men as trees, Mark viii. 24. though all of one kind by nature, of very opposite dispositions ; possessing various talents useful for different purposes.

Some of these trees, for stature and majesty, look like kings over the rest, being as so many Sauls among the woody people. In like manner, some men's education, excellent talents, and good behaviour, give them a superior dignity to the rest of their brethren.

Here I perceive several beautiful trees growing, as it were, out of one root, like so many brothers linking their branches together, supporting one another as they grow; so that hardly any wind, though blowing ever so tempestuously, shall be able to overturn them. A beautiful emblem this of what men ought to do: being all sprung from one root by nature, ought not they to live as brethren, linking their concerns together, supporting and strengthening one another? If this were the case, how stable and flourishing would kingdoms, nations, and families be! Then the storms of anarchy, sedition, and intestine broils should be unable to overthrow them. Thus the Church would flourish like Lebanon, Hos. xiv. 5., and the world be rendered a paradise.

The royal Psalmist beautifully expresseth the high delight he had of such a state as this through the whole of Psal. cxxxiii., and that this may more and more take place, may I cast in my mite in cultivating a brotherly disposition towards all men, especially the household of faith, accounting them my nearest and dearest brethren; for have we not all one Father, one Saviour, one



Sanctifier, one hope, one faith, and one inheritance, at last to be conferred on us all. If we love not one another, it is a proof that we love not God, and therefore have no title to the inheritance of the saints in light : “ for “ if we love not our brother whom we have “ seen, how can we love God, whom we “ have not seen ? ” 1 John iv. 20.

Neither ought our love to be confined to those saints only who are rich in this world, but extend also to those who are poor ; for if we love the former only, it is the image of the world in them which attracts our love ; but if also the latter, it is a sign it is the image of God in both which engageth our esteem. Neither ought the personal injuries of either committed against us, if we hope they are saints, to cool our love to them as such, but rather to draw forth our compassion to bewail these sad slips of theirs, while we pray for their recovery. If Stephen prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies, when they were in the very act of stoning him ; and Christ for his bloody murderers on the cross, Acts vii. 60. Luke xxiii. 34., ought not we for those who are real friends in

Christ, though at times they be guilty of the actions of our enemies ?

Neither should their favours to us be the main things which draw forth our love to them, although they may tend to heighten it; for if either the former retard our love, or the latter mainly attract it, such prove it not of the genuine kind, and therefore dangerous to be relied on as a mark that we are the children of God.

Here is a stately walnut tree, under the shade of which grow a few young ashes, which have unhappily been planted there by the wind; for, owing to his droppings, they make but little progress, nay, rather seem to be on the decline: So I may call him an oppressor. And how many among the children of men more justly merit this name; who, when they are advanced somewhat highly, and grown rich in this world's goods, oppress those whom Providence hath placed under them? But this is their comfort that fear the Lord, he will arise for their oppression and sighing, and set them in safety from their oppressors, Psal. xii. 5. What a privilege is this which I enjoy in common

with others ! that I can walk through the wood, approach to and contemplate every tree with safety ; though justly, on the account of our first parents having not only approached to, but eaten of the forbidden tree, every tree in the world might have been made a Bohun-upas, or poison tree, that no man could have come within many miles of, without certain death ; as it is reported of this tree, which is said to grow in the island of Java in the East Indies, where for ten or twelve miles around, no tree, herb, grass, or any animal is seen to exist, and very few of the criminals who are compelled to visit it ever return \*.

What is this which makes the whole wood resound ! It is repeated again and again. What an awful crash is that ! Let me cautiously step back a little to that glade, and see if I can discover what it is. Ah ! now I perceive it hath been the hewer plying his axe, which has occasioned all I have heard ; for yonder is the lofty walnut tree which I was but lately contemplating laid

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\* See Appendix to Darwin's Botanical Garden, and the Universal Magazine for January 1784.



low. Happy ashes! you are now delivered from your oppressor, and may grow up with freedom. Just so death at length will hew down every oppressor among men; then shall the oppressed be delivered from their tyranny.

As the neighbouring trees were made to quake, while the hewer was cutting down that of the walnut, so at the report of death having done his office on some of our neighbours, we are struck with awe, which almost as soon is over with us, as that vibration of the trees after their neighbour had fallen, and alas! too often leaveth no salutary effect,

Here, in this rather marshy place, is an aged alder, in the trunk of which the night-owl has often shrieked, hatched, and brought forth her young; so brittle, twisted, and crooked, that it is good for nothing but to be cast into the fire. This is an emblem of a sinner who hath lived perhaps threescore and ten, or fourscore years in the world, in whose heart Satan hath often, as it were, brooded and brought forth his horrid temptations; whose life and conversation all that



time hath been crooked from the divine law : and such deriving no sap from Christ Jesus (not being ingrafted in him) are good for nothing, but being cast forth into hell fire.

There are a few elms, straight and tall, which do no little honour to the skill of the woodman ; not a dead branch nor superfluous bough encumbers them. By this care, together with the answerableness of the soil where they grow, their trunks are become comely and large ; these in due time will be taken from the wood, and put to excellent uses. So the righteous grow up as the planting of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 3., being purged from and pruned of every thing that might hinder their growth in grace, with the potion of personal affliction, and sharp knife of outward crosses ; they grow up heavenward, strong in the Lord ; and when they are cut out of the wood of the world, will be put to a noble use, even to glorify God, and to enjoy him through all eternity.

Here is the lofty bay proudly spreading his branches around, as if he were king of the wood, and valued none of his neighbours.

This is that tree to which the royal Psalmist compareth the prosperous state of the wicked: "I have seen the wicked," saith he, "in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree," Psal. xxxvii. 35. How just is the comparison! To look with a superficial eye on the wicked in prosperity, we are apt, with Israel's king, to conclude they are happy, and envy their state, Psal. lxxiii,

Yonder is a tree with a large and beautiful shade, under which I may find an asylum from the beams of the sun, which are now become scorching: Thither will I go for a little.

How salutary is such a shade when the sun is so hot! O how infinitely more so is the covert which Christ's blood and righteousness afford from the scorching wrath of Almighty God! And glory to his name who hath made all men welcome, nay, even invited them to fly under this shelter for protection.

O! this is the plane; how exceedingly broad are its leaves, of a lovely green, and curious delicate shape: the shade is truly

delightful ! This is that tree which was anciently so much esteemed, according to history, by the Romans, that they went to Africa to fetch it into Italy, from whence it was propagated in France, where those who walked under its shade had to pay tribute to the Romans. What infinitely more reason have all men to pay the tribute of thanks and praise to the Creator of all, for not only making the world, but also bountifully furnishing it with excellent, comfortable, and useful accommodations for man and beast, of which trees are none of the smallest.

There on these branches the birds sing, and may build their nests in safety, free from the ravages of quadrupeds, which, if their nests were not so elevated, would thereby often be destroyed : and under their shadows, not only the beasts, but also men, often find a shelter from rain, cold, or heat, as I do at present. But incomparably more ought I and all men to praise the Lord for his unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus, who is an hiding place from the wind of the Almighty's fury, and a covert from the tempest of his infinite wrath, and as refreshing as rivers of



water in a dry place, to all those who will fly under his shadow, which is as a great rock in a weary land, Isa. xxxii. 2. The spouse proved this when she saith, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste," Cant. ii. 3.

He is that tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, Rev. xxii. 2., but blessed be God, though he debarred man from approaching the tree of life in paradise, he hath discovered unto him one in the paradise above, of a spiritual kind, and infinitely better, to which he hath not only allowed free access, but also invited, nay, even entreated,--astonishing love!--and earnestly besought us, who were not his friends, but enemies, and full of enmity, to come under his shadow, eat of his fruit, and live for ever, Isa. lv. 1. Matt. xi. 28. 2 Cor. v. 20. John iii. 16. O that I may then say from experience, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste," Cant. ii. 3.

While I am pressing through this thicket, I perceive a timorous hare, alarmed for her safety, has sprung from her den: how



swiftly she runs across yonder opening, and is lost to my view. Poor creature! thou mightest have enjoyed thy repose in safety for me.----What can be the reason that the animal creation are so much afraid of man, and man of them? Methinks something whispereth in my ear, The fall is the occasion of both; for ever since man broke his trust with the Creator, those inferior creatures durst trust him no more; and even no man could put confidence in a brother. And though he had the grant of dominion over all the creatures, yet they, as it were, sensible he had lost that wisdom, prudence, and mildness, that was necessary for such a governor, ever since he was afraid to meet with God, Gen. iii, 8, 9, 10. have been afraid to meet with him, and sought to shun his presence: And indeed well they may, for, since that time, they have often experienced his cruelty.

Among all the sins of which men are guilty, I am persuaded that that of cruelty to brutes is none of the least; and I cannot doubt, but in the judgment of the great day, by the Searcher of hearts, and Witness of all our actions, that sin will be exposed. What an

awful account then will many have to give, who have here unmercifully treated those beasts over which they had power? If God hear the young ravens that cry unto him, and supply them with food, Psal. cxlvii. 9. will not he, who is a God of pity, hear the cries and groans which the cruelty of man extorteth from the animals, and avenge their oppression?

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, Prov. xii. 10. the negative of this scripture, no doubt is, a man that regardeth not the life of his beast is not a righteous man: "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," Psal. cxlv. 9. We ought therefore to copy after this darling attribute of the Creator; for our Lord and Saviour hath said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," Matthew v. 7. the negative of which no doubt is, Cursed are the unmerciful, for they shall not obtain mercy: What a strong incitement to that duty is this benediction and its negative? Be ye therefore merciful, as your father also is merciful, Luke vi. 36.

If God were as unmerciful to us, as many of us are to brutes, how miserable would our lives in this world be ! Those inferior creatures were given to man for his use, but not to be abused by him. The faculty of reason, which setteth him superior to them, giveth him no more warrant to be cruel to such, than the superior nature of the angels giveth them a right to tyrannize over us ; but, on the contrary, ought to move him with compassion to those creatures which are made to groan and travail in pain for his sins, Rom. viii. 22.

To induce us to be tender to them, especially those of the domestic kind, we ought to consider, that they could do much better without us, than we could do without them : And are they not most obedient servants, not for a short term only, but all their lives, if we choose ; submitting to our greatest drudgeries, without ever repining ?

If we are of the opinion that the brutal creation have no futurity of any kind, what a sad thing then is it to make their short existence a miserable one ? On the other hand, if we think with others, that they will be



restored to their primeval state, we may be afraid they will one day witness against their relentless oppressors.

To favour this last opinion, some take Rom. viii. 19.---22. to refer. Whether this be the case, one thing is certain, that man at the last must give up an account how he hath improved the talents and power he was entrusted with, and so of his lordship over the creatures.

That shot has surprised me very much ! it has made all the wood echo. Oh ! I perceive a poor robin has fallen a victim to the fowler. Cruel man ! how could you deprive such an innocent creature of its existence, and at the very time it was attempting as it were to soften your cruel breast with its delicate song : Sure it was doing you no harm, nor is its little carcase of any benefit to you, for I perceive you have left it lying at the foot of yonder tree.

Poor robin ! no more wilt thou visit my habitation in the pinching frost, peck up a few crumbs, and shelter thyself under its roof ; nor repay me with thy song in the



spring ; no, thou art gone, and hast nothing to reckon for ; but trifling as thy death may seem to thy murderer, I will not say but he will have to answer for it, for not a sparrow can fall to the ground without our heavenly Father's notice, Mat. x. 29.

By this barbarous deed, an innocent creature is not only deprived of life, but its mate of a partner, the young of a parent, and the grove of a songster. Strange depravity ! that any man can take pleasure merely in the pain and destruction of harmless creatures ! I am very much afraid, among all the instructions which parents give their children, that that of being merciful to the brutal creation is too often neglected ; whereas, if this were inculcated by example, admonition, and the rod, it might be the means of preventing boys from exercising a wanton cruelty upon domestic animals, killing birds with stones, and destroying their progeny when they find them in the fields : and might be the means, through grace, of giving them a merciful turn of mind when they arrive at riper age : “ Train up a child in the way he “ should go, and when he is old he will not

“depart from it,” saith the inspired Solomon, Prov. xxii. 6.

Here is a lofty spreading oak, probably destined to encounter the dangers of the sea, and the fiery storms of war; round which clings the woodbine. Happy shrub! though feeble in thyself and unable to stand in the furious blast, thou hast made choice of a noble support. May I like thee take hold of, and lean upon Christ Jesus by faith, who hath borne the infinitely furious tempest of God's wrath for all them who thus cleave to, and lean upon him; and then, by so doing, though feeble in myself, I shall be able to stand and endure the blasts of persecution, temptation and trial, agreeably to that promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee;” “for my strength is made perfect in weakness,” 2 Cor. xii. 9.

There lie a number of trees of various kinds and growths, which have been lately felled, with their tops, some of them toward the east, others toward the west, some toward the north, and some the south; as they have fallen so they lie, nor can they alter their situation. Just so is it

with respect to mortal men ; in the state they die, there they must continue through all eternity.

How much then doth it concern me, and all men living, to see that we die in a state of reconciliation with God, in and through the Mediator Christ Jesus ! Many things that we do wrong while we live may be rectified : if we read wrong, that may be righted ; if we hear wrong, that may be righted ; if we pray wrong, that may be righted ; if we communicate wrong, that may be righted ; but if we die wrong, that never can be righted ; for there is a great gulf fixed, over which there is no passing neither from heaven to hell, nor from hell to heaven, Luke xvi. 26. What is the language of such a passage to us who are still in the land of the living, and in the place of hope, but this, “ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end ! ” Deut. xxxii. 29.

There I perceive many of the stumps of the trees are begun to sprout forth. This putteth me in mind of what the man of patience beautifully expresseth in these words :



“ For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut  
“ down, that it will sprout again, and that  
“ the tender branch thereof will not cease :  
“ though the root thereof wax old in the  
“ earth, and the stock thereof die in the  
“ ground : yet through the scent of water  
“ it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a  
“ plant. But man dieth and wasteth away ;  
“ yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where  
“ is he ? As the waters fail from the sea,  
“ and the flood decayeth and drieth up ; so  
“ man lieth down, and riseth not till the hea-  
“ vens be no more ; they shall not awake,  
“ nor be raised out of their sleep,” Job xiv.  
7.---12. ; but at the resurrection they shall,  
in that awful, miraculous morning, big with  
events, and full of amazing wonders, when  
the great archangel winds so loud his trum-  
pet, that it shall resound through all the  
dark caverns of the tomb, and awaken all  
the dead with a voice more tremendous than  
Sinai’s loudest thunders, the awful import of  
which is, “ Arise ye dead, and come to  
“ judgment !” Then shall every necessary  
particle of human dust, whether in the land  
or in the sea, though incorporated with that  
of the inferior creatures in both, come forth  
from all the four winds speedily, with every



bone to the destined place of rendezvous, and rear the human frame again immortal : nor shall a bone mistake its bone, but every bone to its own bone shall closely join, and not a bone, nor least particle of dust be misplaced or a-wanting.

Then shall literally take place what the prophet saw in vision concerning the dry bones, Ezek. xxxvii. 1.---8. while the gates of heaven and hell are thrown open, and all the souls come forth and take up their old tenements again for ever.

Righteous souls and bodies, then, like near and dear friends who have long been parted from one another, shall rejoice to meet again : But dreadfully reluctant shall wicked souls and bodies meet, each beyond description irksome to one another, but meet they must to their eternal horror.

This day they often heard of while in time, but either made light of it, or endeavoured to disbelieve it altogether ; but now it is come, come to their everlasting confusion.

Though they used to say, by their practice while in this life, there was no God, and many of them attempted to disbelieve that eternal truth ; now they are convinced effectually of their error, and with the devils believe and tremble, James ii. 19. in horrible amazement, knowing there is a God, a just God, too, and a terrible, whom they see, with infinite wrath in his countenance, coming in the clouds of heaven with awful majesty and glory, with ten thousands of his saints, and all the holy angels in his train, Jude 14. Matt. xxv. 31.

Before his infinitely august presence, sun, moon, and stars, as conscious of their impurity in his sight, shall go into a total eclipse, again to shine no more ; while the heavens, as it were sensible that their end is come, pass away with a great noise, 2 Peter iii. 10. and are rolled together as a scroll, Isaiah xxiv. 4. Revel. vi. 14. for which there is no more use : For man shall read no more in their fair page, the greatness, wisdom, mercy, and kindness of the Lord : The elements shall melt with fervent heat, 2 Peter iii. 10., and the mountains shall be dissolved like wax ; while the earth and works

therein flame all in one destructive blaze ; all in horrible consternation, shivering with absolute despair ; where to fly, or what to do, the wicked are for ever at a loss to know.

To fly from the presence of the Almighty God their Judge, they are anxious inconceivably more than a woman in travail is to be delivered, but that is altogether impossible ; to do any thing for their safety, is as much so as the former ; for now the long sparing mercy of God is for ever, ever at an end, with respect to them.

He who once offered to be their Saviour, and earnestly entreated them to accept of him and all his benefits, by the everlasting gospel : (but him they would not accept, and made light of all his benefits :) now, with respect to them, his clemency is no more : No, he who shed his blood to save the very chief of sinners, (eternally cutting thought to them !) is now their judge and inexorable enemy.

Now they cry to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face

and wrath of the Lamb, Revel. vi. 16. but these are all in flame. Contented for ever would they be, if they could but obtain that wish, though dreadful to human nature, to be entirely annihilated ; but neither shall this be granted.

If, after ten thousand times ten thousand years, if years could be then numbered, they were to be freed from their torments, they would count it an inestimable privilege, and endeavour to be willing to bear their horrible pains ; but neither shall this be the case.

Oh ! then, if after as many millions of years as there are piles of sand on the sea shore, bottom of the ocean, and beds of rivers ; blades of grass in the fields, particles of dust in the earth, herbs and trees in the world, fowls in the air, men, beasts, and reptiles on the earth, fish in the waters, ears of corn in autumn, leaves on the trees in summer, feathers on the fowls, hairs on men and beasts, scales on the fishes, constellations and stars in the heavens, and all these a million times a million so many as they are, they were to be entirely annihilat-



ed, they would count it some alleviation of their misery.

Dreadful thought ! Awful count ! far surpassing the arithmetic of man, and perhaps that of angels !

Yet neither indeed shall this take place ; for as their offences have been against the infinite God, who deserveth an infinite satisfaction, and as they can never be able to give that, they must be punished through all eternity. All dread, all horror, and all despair, they are forced to wait their final doom, with all their crimes full in their face, written in the page of their memory in legible characters as with a sun-beam, which shall be declared before men and angels.

But, on the other hand, the righteous are as much transported with love, joy, and happiness, as the wicked are racked with despair, misery, and woe. With joy they lift up their heads, see their Lord and Saviour ; not in the manger and stable of Bethlehem, not as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, not despised of the people, nor having where to lay his head,

not arraigned at Pilate's judgment-bar, nor suffering on the bloody cross and giving up the ghost ; but coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory ; in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels ; the Almighty God, the Judge of quick and dead, their Friend, who once did die for them ; and are joyfully caught up to join the happy train, and meet him in the air,

The wicked, as trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots, Jude 12., shall be adjudged and cast into eternal burnings ; while the righteous, as trees planted by the Lord, shall be acquitted from all the aspersions thrown on them by men and devils, and removed to the highest heavens, there to flourish and grow ever green with happiness, glory and joy, through all the countless ages of eternity.

Here is an apple tree, which in its wild state bears nothing but crabs, hard and sour fruit, which are only fit for feeding swine ; whereas if, contrary to nature, it were cut out of its natural stock, and ingrafted into a good tree, the fruit of it

might be much improved, and rendered useful to its owner. Just so is it with respect to men while in their natural state; all the fruits they bring forth are corrupt, hard, and spur, fit only for feeding their swinish lusts, hateful to God, and destructive to themselves.

Their own righteousness, a fruit being produced from the soil of a broken covenant, instead of nourishing the soul that eateth it, will only poison it at last, if it be not prevented from feeding thereon; whereas, when they are cut out of their own natural stock, and ingrafted into Christ Jesus, they bring forth the fruits of righteousness and true holiness in, and through him, acceptable to God, useful to themselves, and grateful to others.

How much then doth it concern me to know whether I have been cut out of my natural stock in Adam, and ingrafted into Christ Jesus, that true vine, John xv. 1. who maketh every branch that abideth in him fruitful: And by the following marks I may know if I be in him.



Am I bringing forth the fruits of love to him, more for what he is in and of himself, and what he hath done for me, than on account of what he hath purchased for me? and the fruits of love to men, and good works, as a test of this love to him, in a cheerful compliance with his authority in his commands, depending nothing on my own righteousness for salvation, but entirely on his active and passive righteousness for that alone. If so, then I may conclude I am certainly in him.

Here and there are trees cut down, of various ages, kinds, and sizes: Here lies an aged elm, and there a young ash; in that place a small chesnut tree, and in this a lofty oak. So death is doing his work upon persons of all ranks and all ages, on our right hand and on our left, behind and before us every day, and yet how little are we concerned! almost as little attentive to those warnings of mortality as the insensible standing trees are to the fall of their neighbours, which know not how soon the axe will be laid to their own roots, nor we how soon we must die.



Strange stupidity ! to be every day as it were in the midst of deaths, and yet think so little about our own ! How many of us live here as if this world were to be our eternal home, and as if it had been the main end of our creation to indulge the flesh, and amass wealth together ; scarcely ever considering that this world is only as an inn by the way to the next, and its good things conveniences of it ; and we as travellers and way-faring men, who turn aside to tarry therein for a night, Jer. xiv. 8. and must quickly be gone : Therefore, as a traveller sets light by all that are in an inn, farther than what serves his own convenience while he lodges there ; so ought we with respect to the things of this world.

There grow a few mulberry trees, the leaves of which are greatly esteemed in some places for feeding the silk-worm, and the berries for making a kind of wine ; but for neither of these purposes do I so highly esteem those, as for that great deliverance and victory which the sound of a going on the tops of them was made a signal of to Israel's king, from and over his and Israel's enemies, 2 Sam. v. 23, 24.

— If I were to hear such a going at present on the tops of these trees, how would it alarm me ! but David, being forewarned of the sign, no doubt such a sound greatly rejoiced his heart, added swiftness to his feet, and strength to his arms, in pursuit of, and fighting with the Philistines. Ought not then the call of him, who is the Lord of hosts to us, to arise and fight against his and our enemies, and his promises of support and victory, to encourage our hearts, and strengthen our hands while we fight the spiritual combat against these worse than Philistines, sin, Satan, and the flesh ?

The woods, now clothed in green, are filled with harmony, love, and care : while some of the feathered people distend their variegated throats in graceful vibrations, singing their artless tales of love to the gay charmers which they eye with desire on the neighbouring boughs ; then having alighted on the verdant turf, and culled a little present for their plummy nymphs, approach them with eager wing, and they, though somewhat coy at first, at length joining beak to beak, accept the endearing food, and soon

retire amid the thicket to receive higher tokens of affection.

Others, busied in collecting materials for building their little matchless edifices, beat the air with active wings. Some, in a state of more forwardness, have hatched their little families, and now explore the fields in search of food for their tender offspring.

Come hither, then, ye faithless youths, who take pleasure in decoying innocents, and learn a lesson from the birds of the air! Shall not their constancy to their mates put you to shame, and in the day of judgment witness against you? You, who have not only nature, but also reason and divine revelation, for your direction.

And you, too, careless husbands and parents, learn from their feeding their mates, when brooding, and providing for their young, the duty which nature has taught you in providing for your families; for if any "provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v. 8.



The crows have already formed their republics, and are repairing their old habitations on the branching firs; and now throughout their lofty towns, all is bustle and cawing noise. The sea-fowl have forsaken the shore, and are retired to their usual haunts in this season of love.

Pause a while, O my soul, and consider whence have the fowls that wisdom to choose the properest place to brood in: Is it not worthy of remark, that those which frequent the shore almost all the year round, sporting themselves in the tide, do not, as might naturally be supposed, build on the sand, as if sensible the swelling surge would render their labours abortive; neither on the adjoining open beach, lest their nests should quickly be discovered; nor on the inland, as that would be too far off when hatching to duck, or procure their scaly food; nor yet by the river's rapid stream, as that would render the obtaining of their provision precarious: but in the cliffs of rocks which overhang the tide, or by the sides of lochs, where they can leave their eggs for a moment, immerse in the water, procure their subsistence, and return again



to their assiduous task, without injuring the brood.

Doth not the wisdom of God appear conspicuous in thus implanting such an instinct in them, by which they are insensibly led, without the help of reason, to make such a discreet choice ?

In the middle of that bramble bush I perceive a bird's nest : let me approach the little edifice, and examine the structure.

How curiously is it built, and how exact and regular are its lines ! Without the help of square or plum, this little architect has constructed all in the nicest and most convenient form : the materials of which it is reared are all distributed through the work in the justest proportion ; on the outside are the coarsest, while the inside, like a fine room, is lined with soft hair or down. No human wisdom could have contrived, or hands have executed, a more answerable accommodation, in which this little songstress might hatch.

Let me then admire the wisdom and goodness of God, who hath endued every

creature with suitable abilities to answer the purpose for which it was made, and perform every function to which it is called.

Amidst these delicately spotted eggs, I discover one different from the rest; and, while I consider it more minutely, I find it is that of the cuckoo, which has cunningly dropped it among those of this little bird. Ah! if it be hatched, as most likely it will, soon will it ruin its neighbour nestlings by throwing them out, and remain possessor of the nest alone.

This may teach me an useful lesson, and put me upon my guard not to harbour any one of Satan's temptations in my breast, lest that, being cherished, prove the ruin of all my graces; which, if entertained and not cast out, certainly will, and at length Satan and sin remain sole possessors of the heart; for grace and sin cannot live together; either grace will be destroying sin, or sin will be destroying grace.

And as the cuckoo cares not how many eggs be in the little bird's nest, provided she can only get one of her own dropped in

among them; so Satan careth not how much grace be in the heart, provided he can only get one sin to be entertained there, knowing well, that one sin will in time dispossess the soul of every grace, make room for more, and sin at last remain sole possessor thereof, as we see in Judas: Satan got him to entertain a covetous disposition in his heart, that in time cleared it of all seeming grace and holiness, and at length made him betray his Lord and Master, and finally opened the door of the heart to despair, which like a terrible giant destroyed the traitor at last by causing him hang himself.

What need have we then to pray with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. One Achan in the camp was like to have proved the destruction of all the Israelites, Joshua vii. "If I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," saith the Psalmist, Psalm lxxviii. 18.



May I therefore from henceforth harbour no sin in my soul, seeing, as long as I regard sin in my heart, it will be in vain to pray : Let me therefore, through divine grace, cast every sin out of it, sparing no Agags there, lest the Lord reject me, 1 Sam. xv. 9.—23.

Is it not the will and commandment of the Lord that I should have war with these Amalekites, my sins, for ever and ever ? and have I not sworn to do so in baptism, if not several times since ? Should I then spare any of these my deadly enemies ?

What a strange tree is the aspen, the leaves whereof continually shake. Just now, though there is not a breath of wind to be felt, how the leaves of this one tremble ! What is the meaning of this ? Methinks I hear it reply, Because the axe is laid to the root of the trees, Matth. iii. 10. and I cannot tell how soon I shall be cut down.

This putteth me in mind of those whom the apostle speaketh of, who for fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 15. a proper fear of death is very



commendable, but a slavish fear of it is highly detestible, as it rendereth the man who is possessed therewith, neither comfortable to himself, nor useful to his neighbours.

To deliver us from this dreadful bondage Christ Jesus died: Let us then imitate Israel in the wilderness, who, when they were bitten by fiery serpents, looked up to the brazen serpent for healing, which was erected on a pole for that purpose, Numbers xxi. 9. even by looking up to Christ Jesus, as lift up on the pole of the cross, taking out the sting of death for us, who did it there effectually, and so be healed of this slavish fear; for death through Christ's dying is converted from being an enemy to be the good man's friend, as it breaketh the fetters of flesh and blood with which he is bound to this troublesome world, and openeth for him the door to eternal life and happiness.

How much then doth it concern me and every one, to know that death will thus be our friend, and to have our acquaintance made up with that enemy of nature, ere we meet with it in the moments of dissolution, so that it may not then prove to us a stran-

ger and an unwelcome visitant ! Happy art  
they who can say with the great Addison,  
when on their death-beds, " See with what  
" peace a Christian can die ! " and happier still  
that can say with Job, " For I know that  
" my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall  
" stand at the latter day upon the earth : and  
" though after my skin worms destroy this  
" body, yet in my flesh shall I see God :  
" whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes  
" shall behold, and not another, though my  
" reins be consumed within me," Job xix.  
25.—27. And with the sweet Psalmist of  
Israel, " Although my house be not so with  
" God ; yet he hath made with me an ever-  
" lasting covenant, ordered in all things and  
" sure ; for this is all my salvation and all  
" my desire," 2 Samuel xxiii. 5. And with  
the apostle, " For me to live is Christ, and  
" to die is gain," Phil. i. 21. " And I heard  
" a voice from heaven saying unto me,  
" Write, Blessed are the dead which die in  
" the Lord, from henceforth : Yea, saith  
" the Spirit, that they may rest from their  
" labours ; and their works do follow them,"  
Rev. xiv. 13.

By the sides of this rill grow a few willows, which bring me in mind of those by the streams of Babel, on which the disconsolate Israelites hanged their harps, Psalm cxxxvii. 2. as having no more use for them : yet it is not said they broke them, or threw them into the river, but hung them on the willows ; which argued their hope that after a very long time, the term of seventy years, foretold by the prophet, Jer. xxix. 10. they should again take them up and rejoice with them, singing the songs of the Lord in the temple of Jerusalem.

And what reason have we of this land to be thankful that we are not obliged to hang our harps as it were upon the willows, and mourn with a bitter lamentation, on account of our being removed from our native land and the gospel, or the ordinances thereof taken from us, because of our ill improvement of it, which is of itself glad tidings of great joy, and the most precious thing on earth ; but how little do we rejoice and be glad at the ever-blessed and salutary news ! angels no doubt are struck with wonder and amazement at our stupidity and carelessness.



It is an old proverb, The well is never missed till it go dry : The Jews made but light of their privileges and Mosaical ordinances when in their own land ; but, after they were carried captive to Babylon, sensible of the value of these, how did they mourn for their loss ! In like manner should we, if deprived of the blessed ordinances of the gospel.

Strange, then, that we should now esteem them so little, and prove so barren under them ! Much need have we to pray that the Lord would accomplish that promise to us, “ I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, “ and floods upon the dry ground : I will “ pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my “ blessing upon thine offspring : and they “ shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses,” Isalah xlv. 3, 4.

As willows delight to grow by the courses of water, so ought we to delight to grow up by the refreshing and healing ordinances of the everlasting gospel. Seeing that the Lord hath planted us in a fruitful field in this land by great waters, even by, and un-



der the ordinances of the ever-blessed gospel, (which are more refreshing to the people of the Lord, than waters are to a thirsty land) and set us as a willow tree; we ought to prove fruitful as a vine, in holiness and good works; being humble before him, and turning our branches of thankfulness and love towards him who hath thus planted us, and bestowed upon us in this island, such great privileges, whereas, if we misimprove them, and bend our roots, and shoot forth our branches towards sin and Satan to his dishonour, and find more pleasure in the ways of sin than in holiness, seeking satisfaction and happiness mainly in the enjoyments of carnal things; we may justly be afraid, that, though we have thus been planted in a good soil by great waters, even those ordinances of the gospel, for the purpose of bringing forth the fruits of holiness; he will pull up our roots, that they shall wither, and blast all the leaves of our spring; and the Lord, for ought we know, may do this without the power of a foreign enemy or people, to deprive us of those inestimable privileges, even by insensible decays\*.

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\* See the ground of all this applied rather differently by the Prophet, Ezek. xvii. 5.—10.

And have we not reason to fear that this may prove the case with us in this land, and that we are already begun to wither? Where are now the visible tokens of God's favour; the power of the word, and the heart meltings under sermons which used to be seen and felt in the days of our forefathers?

When the shadows wax long, as the pious Gray observes, is it not a sign that the day is hastening to an end, and the night fast approaching? And is it not lamentable to observe, that the shadows of religion are more delighted in by many than the substance thereof? and hath not church-discipline of late years been more in shadow than in substance, and growing still more and more so? All which call loudly in the ears of church members, to sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof, Ezek. ix. 4.

May I be among this happy number of Zion mourners, so that I may have a mark set upon my forehead, which may distinguish me for safety in the day of destruction.

Willows are very pliable, easily twisted whatever way their owner chooses ; so ought mortal men to be to their Creator.—Is it his will that we should be in prosperity and affluent circumstances ? let us therein be humble, and rejoice with thanksgiving, joining trembling with our mirth, according to that beautiful direction of the royal Psalmist, Psalm ii. 11.

On the other hand, are we afflicted and poor ? let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, with a cheerful resignation to the divine will, (not with a forced submission), saying, with the man of exemplary patience, when he was stripped of all his wealth and children, “ Naked came I  
“ out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall  
“ I return thither ; the Lord gave, and the  
“ Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the  
“ name of the Lord.” “ What ? shall we  
“ receive good at the hand of God, and shall  
“ we not receive evil ?” Job i. 21. and ii.  
10. and with the prophet, “ Wherefore doth  
“ a living man complain, a man for the punishment  
“ of his sins ?” Lam. iii. 39.



On this rising ground stands the ever verdant yew, exposed to the northern blast ; the ancestors of which have no doubt furnished many famous bows to our ancient warriors ; but, ever since the invention of gun-powder, it has been but little regarded ; nay, for some offensive qualities more imaginary than real, this once esteemed tree is banished the society of those trees planted in gardens and pleasant groves, to places more remote and barren, and here and there only one of this hardy useful race is now to be found.

Such trees are emblematical of the people of the Lord, whose verdure of grace and constancy to the truth still remain, in midst of the sharpest trials to which they are exposed, whether from men or devils.

If at any time, through the weakness of the flesh, and the strength of indwelling sin, they be overcome, (which indeed they often are, for there is no man that liveth here and sinneth not, 1 Kings viii. 46. 2 Chron. vi. 36. Eccl. vii. 20.) like bows made of this elastic wood, they immediately return to that bent from which they had been forced by the law of the members, Rom. vii. 23.



They are often likewise persecuted to banishment, and even to death itself; and for what reason? only because they prove to be offensive to the wicked: nor is this owing to any thing in them, or the principles of that holy religion of which they are the votaries, (which are all calculated for the most salutary and endearing purposes) but wholly owing to the noxious qualities of the wicked themselves, which, like sore eyes that cannot endure the light and beams of the sun, are offended by the purity of their lives, precepts, and doctrines which they teach.

There is the comely chesnut, which is not only patient of the cold itself, but assists those of its own kind in defending other trees from the nipping frosts and severities of winter. So the people of the Lord are not only patient under trials, whether of a spiritual or temporal nature themselves, but contribute also very much, by their example and salutary counsels, to support others who are afflicted with such.

This tree also putteth me in mind of those variegated rods of the same wood, which

Jacob used to encrease his wages from his deceitful father-in-law, Gen. xxx. 37. these means he knew, though unavailing in themselves, by the blessing of the Lord upon them, would answer his end ; and that it was only this made them do so, he saw in a dream, Gen. xxxi. 10, 11.

Very small means, and even those, one would imagine, to be contrary to the design for which they are used, through the divine blessing, prove effectual. Witness the clay which our Lord made use of to anoint the blind man's eyes, John ix. 6.

Here is the fir, which, for its lofty majestic stature, and perpetual verdure, stands unrivalled by any tree in the wood. To this our Lord hath condescended so infinitely low for our more suitable uptaking of his goodness, to compare himself : " I am like a green " fir tree," saith he, " from me is thy fruit " found," Hos. xiv. 8.

Not more delightful and refreshing to the sun-burnt weary traveller is the shade of this tree, (which indeed is most pleasant and salutary in those hot eastern countries, where it

grows to a very great size) than Christ is to the Zion traveller : " I sat down under his shadow with great delight," saith the spouse, " and his fruit was sweet to my taste," Cant. ii. 8.

As this tree shades those who come under it, not only from the scorching beams of the sun, but also from tempestuous winds, hail, and rain : so Christ Jesus sheltereth them who come under his shadow from the heat of Satan's malice, the furious blasts of an accusing conscience, the storms of God's infinite wrath, and showers of eternal vengeance : " He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," Psal. xci. 1.

And as this tree, like others, stands with open shade, to receive any under it that will come : so Christ Jesus standeth with open arms, as it were, to shelter all guilty sinners who will fly to him for safety : He, the God-man, is " as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest," Isa. xxxii. 2.



It is said that the smell of this tree drives away wild beasts: so Christ, whose "garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia," Psal. xlv. 8. driveth away the wild beasts of sin and corruption from them who fly under his shadow.

Here, in this low level part of the wood, grow a number of beeches, tall and straight, yielding a beautiful shade. It is observed in this friendly manner and situation of soil, these trees make the most proficiency in growth: So when Christians live humbly and friendly with one another, bearing one another's burdens, helping each other forward in the way to Zion, they make the most proficiency in growth in grace: where-  
"as he that exalteth himself shall be abased;  
"and woe to him that is alone, for when he  
"falleth he hath none to help him up," Luke xiv. 11. Eccl. iv. 10.

These trees, when young, grow exceedingly crooked, knotty, and ill-shaped, but turn more and more beautiful and straight as they grow up: In like manner, those newly converted from sin to a life of holiness are but crooked from the divine law, knotty and



thwart to the will of God, in comparison of that beautiful conformity to the holy law, and cheerful acquiescence in the divine will, to which they arrive afterward through sanctification of the Holy Ghost.

It is likewise observed, that the leaves of these trees vary their colours toward autumn; so the Christian's robe of implanted righteousness groweth whiter and whiter towards the harvest of death.

The leaves of these trees also are reported to make fine sweet beds to lie upon; so a well spent life, and a conscience void of offences toward God and man, make a sweet death-bed.

The mast of this tree yields fit oil for lamps; so the life and conversation of a Christian ought to be all as a shining lamp, to direct others the way to Zion, past the shoals and rocks of vanity, which the god of this world hath made and reared to wreck the unwary mariner, while he steers his vessel over the sea of human life.

Here is the service tree, which, regardless of his own safety, gives us early intimations of the approaching spring, by daring to bud forth, while yet the short-lived day affords the shivering spectator but a bleak prospect, and the tops of distant hills lie buried in snow. Thus the righteous, in the midst of the severest trials, shew forth their attachment to religion, and dare confess the name of Jesus, although the times present a dangerous prospect; even threatening persecution unto death for so doing.

This tree, for its medicinal qualities, may be reckoned the citron of our island, as the fruit of a certain kind of it, along with some other things, greatly corroborate the stomach. It is also good for removing sedentary and laxative complaints, while the stalks and flowers, through a chemical preparation, recover consumptions, and tabid bodies.

This tree is also said to prove beneficial in a variety of other diseases \* :---So the righteous, through the divine blessing, by their

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\* See Evelyn's Discourse on Forest Trees.

example and precepts, prove healing to minds which before could not relish the things of a spiritual nature, but, like a sore stomach, incapable of proper digestion, was uneasy under such : They are also often made the instruments of awakening and recovering sinners from their careless and loose lives ; and through their means have not both the visible church and state been preserved from decay ? They are the salt of the earth, Matt. v. 13. which preserveth the world from destruction ; yet how much are they despised by the men of the world, though it is owing to them the finally impenitent are kept so long out of hell. See Gen. xviii. 23.---32.

But whatever healing qualities this tree or any other plant or mineral possesses, they are all owing to the great Physician Christ Jesus, by whom the worlds were made, Heb. i. 2., who, for the good of mankind, created them with such virtues ; and however much they, as a mean, cure natural diseases, and the righteous, through their example and precepts, heal spirituals ; infinitely more doth Christ Jesus, that great Physician of value, heal both kinds of diseases ; nay, it is only by his divine blessing that any means of re-



covery is made effectual: and blessed be his most holy and excellent name, that he still waiteth, without money and without price, to heal all diseased souls that come to him for a cure: and seeing there is yet balm in Gilead, and a physician there, Jer. viii. 22., may I and every one apply to him for the recovery of the health of our souls.

There is the sycamore, which in summer yields a pretty, delightful shade; but I very much dispute whether it be the tree which is called by that name in sacred scripture.

This is not very much esteemed, that appears to have been considerably valuable; this is barren, that was fruitful; as we see by the employment that the prophet Amos followed before the Lord called him to that high office. See Amos vii. 14.

Yet little esteemed as this tree is, in comparison of many others in the wood, from it, Zaccheus-like, we may see the Lord, Luke xix. 4. not in his person and human nature, but in his bountiful works of creation, who hath furnished the world with such a variety of trees, herbs, and flowers, not for the



use only, but also for the pleasure of his reasonable creature man.

But Oh ! how unthankful is man for all the bounties of creation ! instead of using such for the glory of the Creator, they are too often prostituted to serve his own pride and vanity.

Pliny and other naturalists say, that the fruit of the sycamore mentioned in scripture does not ripen till after it has been rubbed with an iron comb ; and Jerom, on Amos, says, it cannot be eaten till after this be done, it is so bitter. So man will never ripen in the fruits of gratitude till once he hath been rubbed with the convincing iron comb of the law, and so made to see and feel how ill deserving of any mercy, and how deserving he is ; nor will his fruits of thankfulness be acceptable and well-pleasing to God, till he be converted from nature to grace, and even only then either, in, and through Christ Jesus.

The Lord's bounty and goodness is manifested much in the works of creation, more in the works of providence, but most of all

in the astonishing work of redemption. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not "all his benefits," was the language of that royal contemplator of God's works, Psal. ciii. 2. and Psal. lxxvii. 12.; and shall it not be my language? Yes, O my soul, bless the Lord, and forget not all his benefits; forget not that he made thee out of nothing a reasonable creature at the first, after his own image, Gen. i. 27. and formed for thee, out of the dust of the earth, an erect and convenient body; for the handsomeness of its shape, beauty of its form, and dignity of its countenance, far surpassing the other creatures on earth, over all which thou wast made lord: and that he placed thee not in the house of the world till once he had furnished it with all things necessary, convenient, and comfortable, for thy accommodation: that thou wast then made perfectly holy and happy: forget not also that he not only formed thee in the womb a complete man in miniature, but preserved thee there, and in due time opened it and brought thee out safely; nourished thee on the breast, and guarded thee from numberless accidents to which thy heedless steps in childhood exposed thee; guided thee safely up the slip-

pery paths of youth to the summit of manhood ; when wounded, pained, and sick, hath often healed thee, and restored thy health, supplied thy returning wants, and relieved thee out of many straits, and constantly preserveth thy being : But, above all, forget not, that when in Adam thou hadst fallen by thine iniquity, and destroyed thyself, rebelled against God, consequently lost his image, and thy holy and happy estate, and wast become a slave to the devil, vile and miserable, obnoxious to the wrath of God, and his eternal displeasure : that then, even then, astonishing to think ! the Three-one God manifested the plan devised from all everlasting for thy recovery, even the ever-wonderful plan of salvation by Christ Jesus.

Forget not, to the remotest ages of eternity, that the Most High God, against whom thou hadst rebelled, and whom thou didst dishonour, not by thy original transgression only, but also by thy highly aggravated actual iniquities, sent his own Son, who was, and is God, equal with himself, into the world, to take thy nature upon him, to work out a righteousness, and to bear all that infinite wrath, or equivalent to it, which thy



sins justly incurred, in thy room and stead ; that thou mightest be set free from the curse of the broken law, and mightest again enjoy the favour of God, and be eternally happy.

Forget not that he willingly came on this errand, and hath fully paid thy ransom : believe this, and rest wholly on him for salvation, and thou shalt not to eternity forget this ever amazing and astonishing benefit which he hath conferred upon thee.

There grow a few beautiful limes, the blossoms of which perfume the air, and invite the bees to an ample store of sweets, from which now they go richly loaden to their cells.

The shade of them is also truly delightful.—Like these trees should all those who profess the Christian name be ; still perfuming the Church, and that part of the world where they live, with the sweet savour of a meek, holy life and conversation, that thereby they may attract others to partake of their sweets ; and that none may go away who come into their society, without



receiving some benefit, unless the fault be their own.

Their shade, too, of protection and comfort ought to be extended toward all their poor brethren. In all this may I, as an individual, according to my sphere, acquit myself through life.

Round this corner of the wood stands a formidable hedge of rugged thorns, like so many soldiers, all with pointed bayonets, armed cap-a-pee, to resist the invader; not on the offensive, but all on the defensive they act. For this should kingdoms arm themselves, and nations wage war; and in this manner, as individuals, should every one's passion of resentment be employed: thus war alone is justifiable, and only then, too, when in defence of just rights and privileges; and until such times as nations and individuals arm for this only, we need not expect to see our swords beat into ploughshares, nor our spears into pruning hooks, Isa. ii. 4.

When a hedge is broken down, the richest pasture, and most pleasant nurseries, are

in great danger of being destroyed ; so when an army, which is as a fence around a commonwealth or kingdom, is much enfeebled and broken, the constitution, wealth, and inhabitants thereof, are greatly in danger of being destroyed by foreign and domestic enemies.

In like manner, when the hedge of discipline around the vineyard of the church is not taken care of, but suffered to be broken down, is not the beautiful planting therein, even that delightful vine, Psal. lxxx. 8. exposed to the ravages of the boar out of the wood, and the wild beast of the field, ver. 13. even to error and corruption, which are more destructive than those would be to a pleasant planting or vine ?

Might not our ancient reformers, if they were now alive, adopt the language of the man of wisdom, with a little variation, and say, We went by the field and vineyard of the church, which, owing to the slothfulness of its watchmen and keepers, was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down, Prov. xxiv. 30,

81., quite different it appeared from the beautiful order in which it was left by us ?

Here, amidst a group of thorns, I see a delicate lily springing up. Charming flower ! thou art destined to grow in a disagreeable situation ; scarcely wilt thou have room to open thy delightful foilage for thy rugged neighbours, which, regardless of thy beauty or odours, will pierce thy blossoms ; and scarce will the wind blow, but thou shalt find their hard oppression and sharp sting : yet though thus pierced and oppressed, thou wilt grow, spread forth, and flourish to perfection.

This putteth me in mind of that beautiful passage in the Song of Solomon, where the spouse is compared to a lily among thorns, Cant. ii. 2. Thus the church hath been in all ages surrounded by an unneighbourly and unfriendly world, which, regardless of either her beauty or salutary benefits, hath oppressed and pained her sore, and striven to retard, by the fierce winds of persecution, her growth and success in the world : yet, wonderful ! to the praise of free grace, even of her head and husband Christ Jesus, in the



midst of this incumbrance she hath been made to grow, bud forth, and blossom as the rose, Isa. xxxv. 1. and Hos. xiv. 5.

As the bush burned and was not consumed, Exod. iii. 2. so the fire of persecution hath never been able to destroy her, but she hath always remained and grown, and shall grow when that fire shall be finally extinguished.

While I am musing, some how or other, these thorns have entangled me by my garments. This remindeth me of that monster of wickedness and miracle of grace, even Manasseh the king of Judah's being taken among thorns. Whether these were thorns literally, or the thorns of afflictions, I shall not determine; only whatever they were, they were made the means of catching him in his mad race to perdition, and of making him stop and consider his ways, Hag. i. 5, 7.; which consideration, through grace, was not only made effectual for stopping him in his mad career, but also of turning him about, and making him run a quite contrary course, even the way of God's commands, Psal. cxix. 32.



Thus the royal Psalmist himself was once caught in the thorns of affliction, when he was running astray, and made to turn again into the paths of the righteous, Psal. cxix. 67. Happy thorns ! happy afflictions ! when thus blessed for preventing men from running to destruction.

But ah ! how many are caught in the thorns of affliction, that are never a whit the bettered thereby, but push forward in their mad career still. These may be said to be taught with thorns the evil of their doings, but, making no improvement of their lesson, are only torn thereby, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth, Judg. viii. 7, 16.

Surely then it is my duty, as well as all others, whenever we are caught in the thorns of affliction, to comply with that call, to consider our ways, Hag. i. 5, 7. what we have been doing, and whither we have been going ; what hath brought us into these troubles, and what is their language to us ?

This is not only to hear the rod, but also him who hath appointed it, Micah vi. 9. If we are grieved for the pain only which these thorns occasion, and seek to get rid of them, without looking duly to the cause that involved us in them, it is a sign they are destitute of that effect which they had upon David and Manasseh.

The thorns of affliction, instead of being a curse, according to their nature, are now made a blessing to the people of the Lord; and are graciously promised to them as preventatives from pursuing their idols to their destruction; "Therefore, behold, I will hedge  
" up thy way with thorns, and make a wall  
" that she shall not find her paths: And she  
" shall follow after her lovers, but she shall  
" not overtake them; and she shall seek  
" them, but shall not find them. Then shall  
" she say, I will go and return to my first  
" husband, for then was it better with me  
" than now," Hos. ii. 6, 7.

But especially those thorns bring to my remembrance that awful event when the powers of earth and hell were let loose against our ever blessed Lord and Saviour;

when a crown of thorns, for pain and derision, was plaited for him, and put on his all-sacred head by the wicked Jews and Roman soldiers, which, after they had mocked him and spit in his face, (that infinitely sacred and glorious face, before which the earth and heavens fly away, Rev. xx. 11. as unworthy to be looked on by him;) they smote with a reed, no doubt into his sacred temples; meantime the blood sprang from a thousand pores while they struck him on the head, Matt. xxvii. 31.

Fie upon you, thorns! you fruit of the cursed ground, Gen. iii. 17, 18. that gave our Lord such excruciating pain! rather, fie upon the Jews and soldiers who contrived and executed this barbarous torture! But, above all, fie upon my sins, and the sins of an elect world, that were the procuring cause of all that shame and pain which our ever-blessed Lord and Saviour suffered; these conceived the barbarous torture, mocked him, spit in his face, and smote the thorns into his temples.

Revenge, revenge, O my soul, all this indignity, cruelty, and pain, which thy sins oc-

casioned to thy dear Saviour, on thy sins, by destroying their life in thee : Yes, O my soul, crucify them which crucified thy Lord, the Lord of glory.

Away with them from thy heart which cried, " away with this man !" Luke xxiii. 18. " away with him, away with him, crucify him !" John xix. 15. Rather do it, O Almighty God, by thy infinite power and grace, for it is a task too hard for me ; yet I am resolved, that through thy grace, which is sufficient, and strength which is made perfect in weakness, 2 Cor. xii. 9. I shall mortify sin daily, crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, Gal. v. 24. And should not I and every one do so, seeing that they crucified the Lord of glory ? May I so revenge the death of Christ on the life of sin in my soul !

And are we not bound to do so in baptism, and many of us since by our own voluntary vows ? and should we harbour as dear friends in our bosoms the stern enemies of Christ ? Should we allow those to live in our hearts, that slew our dear Saviour ? No, whatever others do, may I resolve, Jo-



shua-like, to serve the Lord, Joshua xxiv. 15. and to crucify them which cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Luke xxiii. 21. for till this be done fully, they will be pricks in my eyes and thorns in my side, Numbers xxxiii. 55. and vex me while I dwell in the church below,

As fire devours thorns, so let the flame of divine love to my dear Lord and Saviour, who hath done and suffered so unspeakably much for me, burn vehemently in my heart, and consume all my sins and lusts ; and may God, to kindle up this fire, shed his love abroad in my soul by the power of the Holy Ghost ! Rom. v. 5.

To be sensible of their evil nature and their dreadful consequences, let me often take a view of them in the glass of my Lord and Saviour's sufferings ; and so through divine grace, though these Canaanites be not all expelled out of my heart at once, yet they shall be driven out by little and little, Exod. xxiii. 30. till at length they be quite destroyed : for sin, like the plague of leprosy, has got into the walls of the house of our human frame, and hath spread over and corrupted our whole

nature, and though we may and must, through divine grace, be continually scraping and cleansing the house, yet sin will never be finally destroyed, till at last the walls of the house, even of our mortal tabernacle, be thrown down by death, Levit. xiv. 37.---45.

As the man whom the priest saw fully covered over with leprosy was to be pronounced clean, Leviticus xiii. 12, 13. so we can have little or no hope of ever being pronounced clean by the great High Priest of our profession, Heb. iii. 1. till we have seen ourselves, not in part, but altogether, soul and body, defiled and covered with the dreadful leprosy of sin, and have fled to him for cleansing; if this be done, we may rest assured God the Father will pronounce us clean, in and through the justifying righteousness of Christ Jesus the great High Priest, who hath atoned fully for all such lepers.

Let every one of us, then, like the leper of old, come to him and say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" that he may say unto each of us as he said unto him, "I will, be thou clean," Matt. viii. 2. for he is as willing to cleanse us at this

day from our sins, as he was at that time to cleanse the leper, if we believe in him who is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God through him, Hebrews vii. 25. ; nay, if we may use the expression, it is in a manner contrary to his will that any should perish ; for, eternally blessed be his name ! he willeth not the death of a sinner : “ Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord “ God, I have no pleasure in the death of the “ wicked, but that the wicked turn from his “ way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your “ evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house “ of Israel !” Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

In my wanderings through this pleasant wood, I find through different windings I am got back again to that place where I beheld the spreading bay ; but where is it now ? not a trace of it is to be seen : it was but a little ago when its spreading verdure seemed to promise lasting prosperity ; but the woodman has been here, and for some cause or other has not only blasted its beauty, but removed it root and branch, so that I can scarcely tell where it grew. Just so the wicked are removed according to that striking description of the Psalmist, which I no-



ticed a little before, when I saw this tree growing in full verdure in this place ; “ I  
“ have seen the wicked in great power, and  
“ spreading himself like a green bay tree ;  
“ yet he passed away, and lo, he was not ;  
“ yea, I sought him, but he could not be  
“ found,” Psal. xxxvii. 35, 36.

Nor will a reflection on their latter end yield the smallest satisfaction to surviving friends or acquaintances ; nay, aghast, they rather force off their thoughts from contemplating such a subject. O how needful then is this ardent wish to be adopted by all living, which we find recorded in Moses’s song, thus : “ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their  
“ latter end !” Deut. xxxii. 29.

O that the wicked in a day of prosperity would thus consider their latter end ! that if they go on in their evil course, notwithstanding of all their worldly prosperity and grandeur, their end at last will not only fill their friends and acquaintances with awful reflections ; but prove beyond description dreadful to themselves ; whereas the latter end of the righteous affordeth, not only plea-



their head as an helmet the hope of salvation, Ephes. vi. 7., and 1 Thess. v. 8., while under the leaves of their Christian profession, the fruit of the Spirit, which "is love, joy, " peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," groweth in clusters, "in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth," Gal. v. 22, 23., and Eph. v. 9.

It is observed of this tree, that it will grow though much oppressed and borne down. Thus did the church in Egypt; the more they afflicted her, the more she multiplied and grew, Exodus i. 12., and so will every true believer; no oppression from their enemies shall prevent their growth in grace; and like the cedar, which spreads wide, and grows very high and strong, yields a delightful savour, is very durable, and in some sort incorruptible; so the righteous spread wide, not only in their holy profession, but also in charity, and in all manner of good works, and grow high, even to perfection, till they all arrive unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Eph. iv. 13.; and, like Abraham, are strong in faith, giving glory to God, Rom. iv. 20.,

they endure to the end, smell like Lebanon, and are born of incorruptible seed, Matt. x. 22. Hos. xiv. 6. and 1 Pet. i. 23. May I thus flourish like the palm-tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

There lies a lofty pine, which the winds have overturned by the roots; the cause of which is, the ground is rather loose, and inclined to moss where it grew; whereas, had it been rooted in firm ground, it might still have been growing in full verdure.

Thus many who profess Christianity, and a strong attachment to the principles of our holy Protestant religion; make a great shew of godliness, and apparently bid fair for the kingdom of heaven; but, owing to the winds of adversity blowing full in their face, or the strong gales of prosperity on their back, are overturned and fall away, Luke viii. 13. and this is owing to their not having been rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus, Eph. iii. 17. Col. ii. 7.

Hear the awful consequence of such an apostasy: "For it is impossible for those  
"who were once enlightened, and have

“ tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made  
“ partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tast-  
“ ed the good word of God, and the powers  
“ of the world to come, if they shall fall a-  
“ way, to renew them again unto repentance;  
“ seeing they crucify to themselves the Son  
“ of God afresh, and put him to an open  
“ shame,” Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.

But blessed be God, this is not meant of all falls, for a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again, Prov. xxiv. 16. “ Though he  
“ fall he shall not utterly be cast down ; for  
“ the Lord upholdeth him with his hand,” Psalm xxxvii. 24. but of the falling away of those who had arrived at such lengths, and partaken of such blessings as the apostle there describeth ; yet how very carefully ought we to comply with the apostle’s admonition, “ Let him that thinketh he standeth, take  
“ heed lest he fall.” 1 Cor. x. 12.

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness, 2 Peter iii. 17,

What a ravishing concert is this, all on a sudden struck up over my head ! How the little choiristers warble their notes and sing the beauties of spring !

From the midst of yonder flowery hawthorn, the blackbird, cheering his mate, which he tenderly eyes in the task of incubation by the side of the rill, sweetly pipes the symphony ; while the wood-lark and thrush, as masters of the song, perch high on the bough, and pour forth their peerless melody through the grove.

How delightful is this place ! Amid the harmony of sprays, the sweet smelling crow-foots, and the smiling green which every where flushes the lovely cheek of surrounding nature, where is the man who can indulge himself in carelessness of thought ? Write that man thoughtless indeed, unworthy of the blessings of spring.

But as for thee, O my soul, as the sap of vegetation arises from the root to the top, improving the whole, climb the ladder of nature, contemplate thy God, see his glory



in all, and his goodness profusely scattered around.

Is there a single plant silent in his praise ?  
Yes, silent they are, but expressing infinitely more than language can unfold. Bear me witness of this, ye lofty pines, which lift your ever verdant heads to the sky in honour of him.

I am here reminded of the earthly paradise when our first father was placed in the delightful garden, midst trees in full verdure, the fruits of all which, one only excepted, he might freely eat ; while the birds sang melodiously around, and all creation was joy : And mindeth me still more of the paradise above, where songs of everlasting praises to God and the Lamb still resound.

May I join the happy concert of the redeemed before the throne, in singing that eternally sweet anthem of gratitude, “ un-  
“ to him that loved us, and washed us from  
“ our sins in his own blood, and hath made  
“ us kings and priests unto God and his Fa-  
“ ther ; to him be glory, and dominion, for  
“ ever and ever ! Amen.” Rev. i. 5. where

a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb : and in the midst of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, is there the tree of life, which beareth twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month ; the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations, Rev. xxii. 1, 2.

Here grow a number of hazels : though they be but little esteemed in comparison of most other trees in the wood, yet are there none more fruitful, if indeed any so much : though they be humble plants, yet are they as useful in their kind as some other trees which are more highly valued.

Not to speak of various other uses they are for, that of hoops for supporting staves of far more valued wood, is none of the least : and as they hold up the staves, and the staves them, thus the one supporting the other forms a complete vessel : so though the poor are numerous in the world, and but little esteemed in comparison of the rich and great ; yet are they, generally speaking, most fruitful in holiness and good works.

As hoops of the hazel support staves of esteemed wood ; so they hold up the rich and great in their affluence and dignity, and the rich and great support them.

Without the poor, not only the wealth, but the dignity of the great, would soon come to nought, neither without these could those subsist: thus human society is still uniformly preserved from decay.

How wisely then hath the infinitely wise and good God connected and linked together human society ! In consideration of this chain of connection, and how useful the one is to the other, let not the poor and low disregard and dishonour the rich and great, nor these despise and oppress the poor.

There is the quick-beam which is so much idolized by the vulgar as an antidote against witchcraft. Greatly bewitched indeed those are ; not by the devil at second-hand, dealers with familiar spirits, but with the evil spirit, the father of lies himself, who believe in this lie, and worship the creature more than the Creator, Romans i.

25. and trust in a senseless piece of wood more than in the living God.

Horribly depraved, strangely bewitched, and great idolaters, such certainly are. However light and trifling to some this charm may seem, it cannot be proved to be any thing less than idolatrous worship: and should we fall down to the stock of a tree? Isa. xliv. 19.

As the stock is a doctrine of vanities, Jer. x. 8., so surely this charm is the same: how carefully then ought parents and masters to be, in teaching their children, and those they have under them, both by example and precept, the evil of such a pernicious conduct; and to place their trust only in the living God, who hath said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," Exod. xx. 3., and who hath all power over devils and wicked men, so that they can harm none of his servants, without his special permission.

The devil could not touch Job, nor even enter into a single swine, without the Lord's particular permission, Matt. viii. 31.; and whenever he withdraweth the sufferance,



not a moment longer can Satan harass, tempt, or hold his possession.

Seeing then the master is under such restraints, what must his servants be ! In full belief of this, that the Most High God hath him and them under his absolute controul ; may I, regardless of both, persevere through grace in discharging my duty to God and man.

The berries of this tree regale the cheerful thrushes, that entertain us with their song through the months of spring and summer, for which this tree ought to be chiefly valued : Herein the goodness of God is manifest, who not only supplieth in due season his rational creatures, but also the fowls of the air, beasts of the earth, and fishes of the sea, with food convenient for them, Psal. cxlv. 15, 16. " The Lord is good to all, and " his tender mercies are over all his works," Psal. cxlv. 9.

The wood-man, I perceive, has planted this grove variously ; some trees in a moist soil, and others on a dry ; some on an eminence, and others on low ground ; some ex-

posed to the northern blasts, and others to the gentle gales of the south; some at more distance from one another, and others more close; and all according as best suits with their natures.

So the Lord, the great Creator of all, hath planted men in the world in various situations: some in affluent circumstances, others in more straitened; some in eminent stations, some in low, some exposed to the sharp blasts of affliction, and others amid the sweet gales of prosperity; some, as it were, singly, without relatives, in comparison of others, and solitary; while others are set in families, Psal. lxxviii. 6., and these increased like a flock, Psal. cvii. 41., and have many friends: and all according as he in his infinite wisdom hath seen best for them.

Had some of these trees, which now grow in a low and moist soil, been planted on a high and dry situation, their growth had been much marred; and, on the other hand, had those which now grow in such a soil, been planted in a low and marshy ground, they would not have prospered so well.

Just so it is with respect to men in this world ; that situation in which every man is placed is certainly the best for him. If many of the people of the Lord, who are poor in this world, had been planted in high and opulent circumstances, it is very probable their fulness would have made them forget God, and thus their prosperity have retarded their growth in religion.

If poor believers would properly consider this, through divine grace it might be a means of reconciling them to the straitened situations in which they are placed in life; and would those, on the other hand, who are placed in exalted stations, fed with the finest of the wheat, Psal. lxxxi. 16. having abundance of this world's goods, and flourishing like a green bay tree, consider it is from the Lord they have received their fulness, and to him at last they must give in an account how they have used the goods he hath entrusted them with, it might, through grace, be the happy means of causing them make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; so that when they fail, they may be received into everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9.

If this be not done, all the wealth which they possess will prove a curse only, instead of a blessing: and what will they do when death cometh to them with this awful message, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward," Luke xvi. 2.

No doubt this grove was all at first planted from proper shoots, yet how many of its trees are become exceedingly crooked, misshapen, and knotty, which putteth me in mind of that beautiful passage recorded by the prophet, where the Lord expostulateth with his people, and telleth them he had planted them a noble vine, wholly a right seed; and asketh this confounding question, "How then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" Jer. ii. 21.

Let me suppose the question asked by the great God at myself in particular, what answer should I give? Would it not certainly be this? Lord, I broke covenant with thee in Adam, voluntarily threw off thy yoke and service for that of Satan, by eating of the forbidden fruit, which thou dischargedst



me to touch, or taste, under the awful penalty of death, Gen. ii. 17. and iii. 3., and thereby fell from rectitude, having lost thy image, which is the reason of my degeneracy, and being crooked and thwart to thy divine and righteous law. But glory to God in the highest; though man did thus degenerate, and become the plant of a strange vine, in and through the covenant of grace, entered into betwixt God the Father, and God the Son, in the name of the elect from all eternity, he is again set right: the effects of which all-gracious covenant were, that God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time came from heaven to earth, not to condemn the world, as our guilty fears might well have suggested, but to fulfil the covenant of works, which man had basely violated, by yielding a perfect obedience to the divine law, and undergoing the penalty which was denounced against man, in case of his disobedience, and to deliver those for whom he became surety, from going down to the pit: In and through whose obedience and all-atoning death, fallen men are not only delivered from the condemnatory sentence of a broken law, but also restored again to the favour and friendship of

God, being united to him, who is the true Vine, by faith.

Through regeneration the great Husbandman purgeth them from sin and dead works, and maketh them to bring forth more fruit, John xv. 1, 2. ; so they grow up as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters, Num. xxiv. 6.

How much then doth it concern me to know whether I be broken off from the old stock of Adam, and ingrafted into Christ Jesus the true vine ! And can there be better marks, or a more certain way of knowing this, than those which our Lord himself hath given us to judge by ; for he hath said, By their fruits ye shall know them : As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me : He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. “ Not every  
“ one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall  
“ enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he  
“ that doth the will of my Father which is

“ in heaven,” Matth. vii. 16. John xv. 4, 5, 14. Matth. vii. 21.

Now, if I find these marks in myself, it is well, but if not, lest I share the fate of that barren fig-tree, mentioned in scripture, let me fly to Christ Jesus by faith, receiving and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to me in the gospel ; that so being united to him who is the true vine, I may bring forth fruit that shall be well pleasing to God, and comfortable to myself.

While I gaze around me, I observe several trees so skilfully pruned that not a sucker from the roots, nor a superfluous branch, nor withered bough on them, is to be seen, either to mar their beauty, or retard their growth, while many others I see stand neglected, having not only various suckers springing from their roots, but also covered over with branches which prove pernicious to both their comeliness and growth, and draw off the sap which otherwise would nourish, lengthen, and strengthen their trunks. Just so it is with respect to men ; the Great Husbandman purgeth some from the love of the world, by chastening them



with many losses, crosses, and straits in it ; so that their affections may be set on things above, not on things on the earth, Col. iii. 2., and pruneth them often of near and dear relatives, which like so many suckers from the roots and superfluous branches from the trunks, tend to draw the sap of love and affection off from God, and place it upon the creature ; and likewise with the sharp knife of afflictive trials, cutteth off their spiritual pride and high-mindedness, and so maketh them humble and lowly, and to grow up to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Eph. iv. 13. “ For  
“ whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and  
“ scourgeth every son whom he receiveth :  
“ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with  
“ you as with sons ; for what son is he whom  
“ the Father chasteneth not ? But if ye be  
“ without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons,” Heb. xii. 6.—8.

Let me then examine myself, whether I have been thus purged and pruned ? and if so, what effect such have had upon me ? God's end in purging and pruning the



branches is, that they may bring forth more fruit, John xv. 2.

How careful then ought I and every one else to be, after having been under the rod, to see that we answer the intention of the chastening, and shew ourselves to be men of wisdom, and pliable children, by hearing the rod, and him that hath appointed it? Mic. vi. 9., if so, instead of being envious, like the Psalmist, in an unthinking hour, at the prosperity of the wicked, Psal. lxxiii. 3. like him, on a proper reflection, we will see such to be on slippery places, ver. 18., and have reason to bless God for his chastisements, acknowledging that his rod, as well as his staff, comforteth us, Psal. xxiii. 4.

Instead then of being too much cast down, and grieved, on account of the afflictions and troubles which we meet with in a present life, let us bless God for these distinguishing marks of sons, and improve them for his glory, knowing well, that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Deep in this sequestered wood, far from the hurry and bustle of life, meditation may be amply indulged, and prayer and praises with freedom ascend on the wings of faith, to the God of heaven, the bountiful Creator of all. For these ends, woods appear to have been at first planted by the hands of man; and hence the father of the faithful planted a grove, Gen. xxi. 33.

These arborous temples, when in full verdure, cannot fail to call forth the serious mind to contemplate that power, wisdom, glory, and goodness, which not only clothe the grass of the field, but also every tree of the wood; and lead to adore our bounteous Lord. Then it is, in the figurative language of the Psalmist, that all the trees of the wood sing out, 2 Cor. xvi. 33.

That groves were highly honoured of old is evident from both sacred and profane history; for what else was paradise, but a delectable arbour and fruitful grove, interspersed with spacious openings, pleasant walks, and beautiful flowers; with every thing else that could attract the fancy, improve the

mind, promote the happiness, or gain the esteem of the perfect pair.

That there grew a multitude of trees is evident from these scriptures: "Of every  
" tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat;  
" but of the tree of the knowledge of good  
" and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. And the  
" woman said unto the serpent, we may eat  
" of the fruit of the trees of the garden.  
" And Adam and his wife hid themselves  
" from the presence of the Lord God among  
" the trees of the garden," Gen. ii. 16, 17.  
iii. 2, 8.

And did not Abraham entertain his heavenly guests under the shade of a tree? Gen. xviii. 4.—9. And the angel of the Lord appeared to his servant Moses in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush, Exod. iii. 2. Nay, Jehovah himself condescended to call unto Moses out of the midst of the bush, Exod. iii. 4.; and he is said to have dwelt in the bush, Deut. xxxiii. 16. And in the feast of tabernacles, were not the Israelites commanded to take the boughs of goodly trees, and branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the



brook, and to rejoice before the Lord their God seven days, and to dwell in booths seven days ; that their generations might know, that the Lord made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, Lev. xxiii. 40, 42, 43.

And when our Lord was riding in triumph into Jerusalem, branches were cut down from the trees, and strewed in the way, in token of high respect to him, Matt. xxi. 8.

Not to mention the tabernacle, mercy-seat, and the adorning of the temple, in all which woods were highly honoured, is it not by them we correspond with the different nations of the world ? For what are our ships but inverted woods ? and has it not been through their means that the gospel hath been carried to all the kingdoms of the earth ? As an echo resounds through the wood, so through these means the glad tidings of great joy, which began first to be proclaimed in Jerusalem, have resounded through all the world.

And was it not upon wood our ever-blessed Lord and Saviour offered himself an



expiatory sacrifice for our sins? Let us then bless God for the bounties of creation; and for making woods to be such a blessing to man.

As woods have thus tended to the propagation of religion, they have also been made the means of punishing the wicked: Witness that from which the two she-bears issued, which tore the forty and two children that impiously mocked the prophet, 2 Kings ii. 23, 24. And that wood through which the rebellious Absalom rode, where the oak caught him by the head, and suspended him between the heaven and the earth, as a monument of divine indignation, and unworthy of a place in either, till Joab came, and thrust him through with his darts; and many a rebel, besides, that day the wood destroyed, 2 Sam. xviii. 7.---15.

Hence we see that the Most High, who ruleth over all, can make the blessings of creation prove a curse to the wicked. Whenever I see an arbour, behold a bush, green branches of trees, or spacious woods, may they bring these memorable things to my re-

membrance ; and may I think on such, and improve them as I ought !

True, indeed, groves have been much abused to superstition and idolatrous worship, for which they have often been cut down, and burned with fire, in order that the deluded votaries thereof might be deprived of such opportunities for celebrating the worship of idols, and as a testimony against idolatry.

Groves of themselves naturally tend to strike the mind with a kind of solemn awe, and fit the wanderer through their secret recesses for deep and serious meditation. It was when sitting under the shade of a tree that St Augustine was converted : and I cannot doubt but many thousands else have either been converted, or at least much improved, with respect to their spiritual interest, by retiring into groves, for the purposes of meditation and prayer.

Then, while many are engaged in vain pursuits, trifling amusements, idle and frothy conversation, the task be mine, frequently to retire from the hurry and bustle

of life among the shades, to contemplate the glorious perfections of the Author of my being, and what kind of a creature I am myself; for what end I was sent into the world, how I am answering that end, how I shall die, and where I shall take up my eternal abode: Thus frequently employing my time, through grace I shall become wiser and better, fitter to live and fitter to die.

Perhaps to this place some of the ancient druids of our island often retired, for the purpose of worshipping their imaginary deities; and shall I in these recesses forget to adore the true God, who hath manifested his exceeding abundant loving kindness towards man, not only in the works of creation and providence, but above all in his work of redemption; as our Lord said in another case, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out," Luke xix. 40. So if I neglect to celebrate his goodness, the very trees, by their cheerful, solemn appearance, would put me to shame, and the birds upon their branches sing out my in-

gratitude, while they praise him after their kind.

It was when Isaac was going into the field to meditate he met with the beautiful and comfortable Rebecca; so in the field of meditation we see the beauty, and meet with the comfort, of holiness. My meditation of him shall be sweet, saith the sweet singer of Israel, Psalm civ. 34. And I will meditate of all thy works, Psalm lxxvii. 12.

Among all the various subjects of meditation which offer themselves to our minds, that of plants is none of the least; and among all the varieties of vegetation, none claims our attention more than the production of trees.

That large spreading oak, tall chesnut, lofty pine, and majestic fir, which I now behold, were all produced, beautiful and huge as they are, each from a rudiment, the thousandth part of which the most acute botanist cannot describe. This first principle, shut up as it were in prison, or rather castle, remained in the mast defended from the winds, guarded from the birds and the injuries of insects, until the full time, when nature broke



open its prison, delivered it from confinement, and committed it to the teeming earth, where it was turned into mucus, or rather rottenness, and so exceedingly small and light, that a single ant could have borne it to its cell : Yet, how astonishing is it ! from this small particle, and that even itself reduced to a state of rottenness, such stupendous trees should arise !

Just so is it with respect to man, who from a mere embryo, in conception, is formed a man in miniature, or rather, as the Psalmist beautifully expresseth it, curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth : “Thine eyes,” saith he, “did see my substance, yet being imperfect ; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them,” Psalm cxxxix. 15, 16.

And as the most acute philosopher cannot describe how a tree in its first principle proceeds to vegetation in the earth, so none can tell how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child, Eccl. xi. 5. At length from his dark concealed non-thinking state, man is brought forth an infant of days, and

in a few years arrives to manhood, 'with all the members of the body in full vigour, together with all the faculties of a rational soul ; the noblest and best of all God's works below,

Then what comparison is there betwixt the embryo in conception, and the full-grown man ? The thoughts of this, or considerations similar, made the Psalmist break forth in this anthem, " I will praise thee, for I " am fearfully and wonderfully made ; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul " knoweth right well," Psalm cxxxix. 14.

Let me then join with the sweet singer of Israel in thus praising the Lord, not for the make of my body only, but also for the formation of my soul, which is no less wonderful : and seeing I am taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, Job xxxv. 11. may I improve these talents to his honour and glory, for which end they were bestowed upon me, and for whose glory I was created.

But, wonderful as the generation, formation, and growth of man is, no less so will

the rearing up of his frame be in a future state, when in the morning of the resurrection every atom of his dust, whether in the land, air, or sea, incorporated with reptiles, beasts, fowls, or fishes, shall meet together at the appointed place, and build the man immortal.

Then, when corruption shall inherit incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, and that saying which is written is come to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory; and the vile body of the righteous fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body," 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54. Phil. iii. 21.

What comparison is there between the stench of putrid carcasses, rotten bones and skulls, and bodies thus formed? The thoughts of which glorious change ought to comfort relatives, when laying their deceased friends in the tomb; and especially when we consider that our Lord sanctified and changed the grave from a gloomy prison to a bed of rest, by his having lain there.

How many and various are the leaves with which the trees are now adorned ! some broad, others narrow, round, oval, multangular, and triangular shaped ; some crisped, others indented ; delicately variegated ; smooth and rough ; some hard and stiff, while others are soft and pliable.

Nor is this clothing of the woods only for ornament, but also for use ; both for preserving and nourishing the trees and their fruits : for as the roots collect the juices of the earth, so those the dews of the heaven, whereby not only the beauty, but also the stature and growth of the trees are promoted.

And though these leaves are hung on the trees by very slender stalks, and yield at the smallest breath of wind that murmurs through the grove, and one might think they would drop off every moment, yet how surprising is it they are made to withstand the most furious attacks of the storm, and maintain their station by a close adherence to their twigs, till the God of nature, who fixed them there, bid them fall off ! In like manner, the leaves of a Christian profession, in some respects with men, are very different ; some



have a broad and flaming profession, which attracteth the notice of all around them; others are not so conspicuous in theirs: but since good principles are as necessary to the being of a Christian, as roots to the tree; so a good profession is as ornamental and necessary to the one, as leaves are to the other; though without the fruit of a holy practice, such leaves will serve no other end than those did, which adorned that fig-tree which our Lord saw in the way, Matth. xxi. 19.; and no doubt upon it were very plentiful; and attracted his notice, and made him to examine it the more narrowly for fruit, but finding none, he cursed it: an awful warning to all those who maintain a fair profession, but are destitute of the fruits of holiness! “Not every one that saith unto me, “Lord! Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,” saith our blessed Saviour; “but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven,” Matt. vii. 21.

As the heart, rind, bark, and fibres, are all necessary to the growth and prosperity of a tree; so blood, bones, flesh, and skin, are all absolutely necessary to constitute the human body. “Thou hast clothed me with skin

“and flesh,” saith Job, “and fenced me  
“with bones and sinews,” Job x. 11. In  
like manner, faith, knowledge, sound prin-  
ciples, and holiness, as necessarily constitute  
the new creature: and as without the heart,  
rind, bark, and fibres, or any one of these,  
the tree could not grow and prosper: nor  
without blood, bones, flesh, sinews, and  
skin, nor any one of them, could the human  
frame subsist; so wholly destitute of all, or  
any one of those constituent parts of the new  
creature, no man need flatter himself he is  
created in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 10., or have  
on the new man, which after God is creat-  
ed in righteousness and true holiness, Eph.  
iv. 24., or have any expectation of salvation  
so long as this is the case; “for without  
“faith it is impossible to please God,” Heb.  
xi. 6: “For it is a people of no understand-  
“ing,” saith the prophet, “therefore he  
“that made them will not have mercy on  
“them, and he that formed them will shew  
“them no favour,” Isa. xxvii. 11. “My  
“people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,  
“saith the Lord,” Hos. iv. 6. “Ye have  
“need that one teach you again which be  
“the first principles of the oracles of God,”  
Heb. v. 12. “He layeth up sound wisdom

“for the righteous : a sound heart is the life  
“of the flesh. Hold fast the form of sound  
“words. Rebuke them sharply, that they  
“may be sound in the faith. Speak thou  
“the things that become sound doctrine,”  
Prov. ii. 7. xiv. 30. 2 Tim. i. 13. Tit. i. 13.  
ii. 1. “To the law and to the testimony,  
“if they speak not according to this word,  
“it is because there is no light in them,”  
Isa. viii. 20. “The new man after God is  
“created in righteousness and true holiness,”  
Eph. iv. 24. And without holiness no man  
shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14.

How careful then ought I and every one  
else to be, in examining whether we have  
saving faith, knowledge, sound principles,  
and holiness? and which of these we find  
ourselves most deficient in, that let us culti-  
vate more and more.

This wood is a receptacle for both clean  
and unclean animals : some ferocious, and  
others gentle, and the latter are often de-  
voured by the former. Just so is this world,  
a habitation for both bad and good men :  
and as Pharaoh's lean and ill-favoured kine  
ate up the well-favoured and fat kine, Gen.



xli. 3, 4. so those ill-favoured, and hell-favoured, eat up those who are the favourites of heaven. Psal. xiv. 4. and this is permitted by the wise orderer of all things, for the best of reasons : but it shall not always be so ; for the tables shall soon be changed ; “ Like sheep “ they are laid in the grave, death shall feed “ on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.” Psal. xlix. 14.

As beasts of the forest come forth in the night to hunt for their prey, but no sooner is the sun up, than they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens, then man goeth to his labour, Ps. civ. 20---23., and the traveller may proceed on in his journey with safety : So the wicked, who are compared to lions, Psalm lvii. 4. harass and devour the righteous in this short mortal life, which is but as a night, or a dream of the night, or rather nothing, in comparison of that endless day which the righteous shall enjoy in a future state.

In that morning, big with the greatest of events, even that decisive morning of the resurrection, when the Sun of righteousness



shall, to the unspeakable joy and comfort of his people, be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory : then indeed shall the righteous have power over the wicked, and these lions shall be gathered together, and made to lie down in the infernal den of utter darkness, eternal misery and woe. Then will the righteous rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; there being nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, Isa. xi. 9.

What pitiful shrieks are these which I hear ! O, I perceive it is a hawk which has seized on a feeble wren, and is bearing it off in his claws, and the poor little creature can do nothing but cry.

Well done, lucky shot ! A fowler just now passing through yonder glade has observed and shot the hawk ; and I cannot help being somewhat glad at the circumstance ; though, poor creature, it was only acting agreeably to the law of nature, yet I could not help feeling very much for the little captive it had seized.

This circumstance putteth me in mind, that however much the wicked may oppress and tyrannize over the people of the Lord, and those that are poor in this world, and though these poor oppressed can do nothing but cry ; yet their cries shall enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, James v. 4. who will arise for the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy, and set them in safety from their oppressors, Psalm xii. 5., for the Lord is the avenger of all such, 1 Thess. iv. 6.

The wicked may take their time in sinning and oppressing the poor and the needy ; but the Lord will take his time in punishing them for their iniquity and cruelty : “ Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,” Rom. xii. 19.



## CONTEMPLATION IX.

## ON A BROOK.

THIS large brook directly in my way, without either bridge or boat over it, putteth me in mind of that recorded Psalm cx. 7. of which our Lord is said to drink.

Whatever be the true interpretation of that passage I shall not determine ; but one thing is clear, the brook of God's infinite wrath ran in the way of man's salvation, so that none of the sons of Adam could ever have got to heaven : nay, like Jordan, it overflowed all its banks, Jos. iii. 15., and would have swept down a whole guilty world into the dead sea of eternal vengeance, had not the High Priest of our profession waded therein, and drank it up, and so made a safe way for the ransomed of the Lord from this wilderness state to the heavenly Canaan.



How then ought all the redeemed to celebrate the praises of the Redeemer ! who, rather than they who had basely rabelled against God, and forfeited their title to eternal happiness, should bear the infinite wrath of Almighty God, justly due to them on account of their sins, bare it himself ; himself who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; nay, who was God, and one with the Father, Philip. ii. 6. John i. 1. x. 30. ; for those that were his avowed enemies, to the astonishment of all in heaven and all in earth ; nor will this astonishment end throughout all eternity, but more and more increase.

Say, O my soul, was ever love like this ? O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God, it passeth knowledge, Eph. iii. 18, 19. Jonathan's love to David was wonderful, passing the love of women, 2 Sam. i. 26. ; but Christ's love to his people passeth not only the love, but the comprehension of the highest seraph in heaven : it is an ocean without brim or bottom, end, or shore, in which the saints will swim through all eternity, crying, " Unto him

“ that loved us, and washed us from our  
“ sins in his own blood, and hath made us  
“ kings and priests unto God and his Father ;  
“ to him be glory and dominion for ever and  
“ ever. Amen.” Rev. i. 5, 6.

As the ocean of redeeming love is infinitely great ; so no less boundless is that of the wrath of Almighty God, which raged and was tempestuous against all the sons of Adam, and was ready to swallow them down into its bottomless gulf ; but for ever blessed be our Lord and Saviour, who Jonah-like said unto his Father, “ Take me  
“ up and cast me into this ocean, so shall it  
“ be calm to all my elect.” This infinitely wonderful substitute the Father willingly accepted of ; so he was cast into the sea of infinite wrath, and like his type was in the belly of hell for his elect, and forsaken of God, Jon. i. 12. ii. 2. Matt. xxvii. 46. Jon. ii. 4., and, as it were, cast out of his sight for a time, that his people might enjoy the favour and light of God’s countenance for ever in heaven.

Thus he dried up this sea, and drank off that brook, and so made a safe way for all

his ransomed ones to come to Zion, Isaiah li. 10, 11. But as the Red Sea was dried up for Israel only, and none but they who had an interest in Moses as their leader could venture safely therein ; so the Egyptians, who presumptuously went in after Israel, were all totally overwhelmed in it : In like manner, the sea of infinite wrath is only dried up for the spiritual Israel ; but all those who have not an interest in Christ Jesus as their Saviour and atonement, who venture on the general mercy of God, will find themselves overwhelmed in this ocean of infinite wrath ; for God to the sinner who is out of Christ is a consuming fire, Deut. iv. 24. Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 12. And how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? Heb. ii. 4. Great indeed beyond the conception of men or angels !

Justice and mercy are both attributes of God ; and mercy will never be shewn at the expence of justice. Man hath sinned, and justice must be satisfied either in his own person, or by another in his room.



If man would attempt to do this himself, he should eternally perish, in satisfying that, which through eternity he shall never be able to do; “(pay that thou owest”, would still be the unalterable claim of law and justice). Yes, for it is a task infinitely too hard for men or angels: none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, Psal. xlix. 7.

What then must be done? Shall all the sons of Adam everlastingly perish? No: blessed, and for ever blessed, be the Lord our God, who in his infinitely wonderful, astonishing, and unspeakable love and free mercy, hath provided a surety every way sufficient to answer the demands of law and justice, even no less a person than his own eternal, only-begotten, and well-beloved Son, one in essence with himself; for all such, and only for such, who should believe in him; “for God so loved the world that he “gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, “but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16.

Doth it then follow, that God will not shew mercy to any of the sons of Adam, un-



less in and through an atonement? And if so, as certainly it doth, how cometh it then that the wicked, who have no interest in Christ as their Saviour, receive mercies, and many comforts in this life? for that they do is evident both from scripture and daily observation, Psal. cxlv. 9. lxxiii. 3.---13.

Although the wicked have no special interest in him as their Mediator, yet they have as their Creator, and in the sufficiency of his merits to save them, if they would believe; for God is called the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10. hence the wicked, for a time, are suspended out of the pit of misery, that their rejection of a Saviour, and of the offers of mercy, may be clearly seen to be of themselves, and God may be justified in their own consciences when he judgeth them, Psal. li. 4. Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life, saith our ever blessed Lord, John v. 40. And again, "How often would I have gathered  
" thy children together, even as a hen ga-  
" thereth her chickens under her wings, and  
" ye would not?" Matth. xxiii 37.

To be made willing to come to Christ and be saved, is a work of God's free grace, which Christ hath merited for his people ; but not to will to come to Christ and be saved, is wholly owing to the wicked themselves, and for which they shall be condemned : " Because I have called, and ye refused," saith the Lord, " I have stretched out my hand, " and no man regarded ; but ye have set at " nought all my counsel, and would none " of my reproof : I also will laugh at your " calamity, I will mock when your fear " cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a " whirlwind ; when distress and anguish " cometh upon you. Then shall they call " upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall " seek me early, but they shall not find me, " for that they hated knowledge, and did not " choose the fear of the Lord ; they would " none of my counsel, they despised all my " reproof : Therefore shall they eat of the " fruit of their own way, and be filled with " their own devices," Prov. i. 24.--31. And again, " He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16.

All the mercies which the wicked are privileged with on this side of time will only tend to their greater condemnation, because they do not improve them. Many waters, we are told in scripture, cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it, Cant. viii. 7. This was perfectly verified in the case of our blessed Lord and Saviour; for though from all eternity he foresaw what our ransom would cost him, he willingly and cheerfully undertook our redemption. The many waters of deep abasement which he saw he must wade through in his human nature, could not quench his love to his elect: neither could the great floods of persecution from men and devils, which ran with an impetuous current over him, from his cradle to his grave, drown it: no, nor yet the flood of God's infinite wrath, though it overwhelmed his soul, and cast him down to the ground in an agony and bloody sweat, Luke xxii. 44. drown his love, or in the least abate it to those for whom he suffered: nor all the floods of resistance and backsliding, of which he foresaw his own, even those for whom he died, would be guilty.

Amazing love ! love without a parallel !  
Was ever love equal to this ? " Bless the  
" Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his be-  
" nefits," Psal. ciii. 2. Seeing that those  
many waters could not quench his love, nor  
these mighty floods drown it ; shall the small  
streams, either of adversity or prosperity that  
I meet with in a present life, quench my  
love to him who is the only lovely object in  
heaven or earth ? Forbid it, O God ; but  
grant that my love may burn to him with an  
encreasing ardour, until at length it be per-  
fected in heaven, in beholding his glory, the  
glory as of the only begotten of the Father,  
full of grace and truth, John i. 14.

This brook also bringeth to my memory  
that over which Jacob sent his cattle, goods,  
wives, children, and all that he had ; but re-  
mained himself by the side of it that night,  
in which there wrestled a man with him un-  
til the breaking of the day, who said unto  
Jacob, " Let me go, for the day breaketh ;  
" but he said unto him, I will not let thee  
" go except thou bless me," Gen. xxxii. 22,  
23, 24, 26.



Noble resolution ! O Jacob ! may I imitate thee in thus wrestling with the Angel of the covenant by prayer, saying unto God, I will not through grace cease to implore thy mercy and forgiveness for all my sins, not because of any worthiness in me ; no, for I am utterly unworthy of any thing but thy infinite wrath ; but only for the sake of thy Son, my dear Saviour, who drank fully of that brook which ran in the way of my salvation ; even bare all that infinite wrath which my sins justly deserved, in my stead.

What Jacob once resolved, through grace, so do I, even not to let thee go except thou bless me ; for my Lord hath merited salvation for me, and hath encouraged me to wrestle with thee in prayer, by the example of the unjust judge, Luke xviii. 2.---8., and hath also promised, saying, “ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,” Matth. vii. 7.

With such wrestlings God is well pleased : Cause me to hear thy voice, saith Christ to the spouse, Cant. viii. 13. They that make mention of the Lord are commanded, say-

ing, "Keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Isa. lxii. 6, 7. And our Lord hath said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Luke xiii. 24.; and told us likewise, that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt. xi. 12.

But as Jacob neither wrestled nor prevailed by his own strength, but through the grace and strength of Him with whom he wrestled; so let us beware of ever wrestling with God by prayer in our own strength, or depending upon any thing in or about ourselves for acceptance, knowing well, that it is only through the agency of the Holy Ghost, and the all-prevailing merits and intercession of Christ Jesus, our prayers can find acceptance with a just and holy God.

With what propriety prayer may be termed a wrestling with God, is best known in the true Christian's own experience: for although at some times he may pray with joy, and, like a ship in a calm, cast the anchor of faith with ease, yet at others he is so dreadfully tossed with Satan's temptations, under

the heavy clouds of desertion, when God withdraweth from him the light of his countenance, that he is ready to sink in these deep waters ; then it is, in the language of a certain godly minister, the soul, as it were, maketh desperate efforts to believe, saying with Jacob, “ I “ will not let thee go except thou bless me :” and with Job, “ Though he slay me, I will “ trust in him.” Gen. xxxii. 26. Job xiii. 15.

But were Jacob and Job the only persons who thus wrestled? No, such also were Moses, Samuel, David, Heman, Elias, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, and Daniel, with many more on sacred record, who all prevailed ; and so shall we, if, like them, instant in prayer, we wrestle with God through faith in Christ ; for he said not unto the seed of Jacob, “ Seek “ ye me in vain.” Isa. xlv. 19. And our Lord hath told us, that God will avenge his own elect, who cry unto him day and night. Luke xviii. 7, 8. And the royal Psalmist, for our encouragement, hath left his own sweet experience on record, saying, “ I “ waited patiently for the Lord, and he “ inclined unto me, and heard my cry ; he “ brought me up also out of an horrible pit, “ out of the miry clay, and set my feet up-

“ on a rock, and established my goings : and  
“ he hath put a new song in my mouth, even  
“ praise unto our God.” Psalm xl. 1.---3.

Methinks now this question highly necessary for us to put to ourselves : Do we deserve the character of wrestlers with God ? if so, what are the marks or evidences thereof ?

First, If we are such wrestlers, such wrestlings will make us humble ; for as the Lord, no doubt to keep Jacob so, touched the hollow of his thigh, and put it out of joint, Gen. xxxii. 25---31., so that he halted ever after : so he, as it were, toucheth the hollow of every believer's thigh, putting him out of conceit with himself, shewing him that he was dislocated by the fall of Adam ; and so grievously put out of joint to the divine law, that it is impossible to walk uprightly before God in his own strength.

Secondly, We will not only lodge our petitions before the throne of grace, but anxiously look and seek after them as a condemned rebel who petitioneth his sovereign for life : Will such a one only lodge his petition



for the royal clemency, and mind no more about it? No: will he not ardently wish for a favourable answer, thinking every hour a day, and day an age, till the messenger arrive with the all-important answer, which if delayed, will he not again and again, with a degree of ardour known to himself only, repeat the momentous petition! Thus did David: "One thing," saith he, "have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," Psalm xxvii. 4.

We do not pray for our daily bread only, but also strive by every means in our power to obtain it; so all true wrestlers with God, not only pray for spiritual blessings, but also strive through the means of divine appointment to obtain the same through grace. But alas! too many of us endeavour to quiet our consciences, by presenting a few lukewarm desires in a formal manner before the Almighty; without looking any more after them, as indifferent whether they be granted, as Pilate was, who after he had asked our blessed Lord, What is truth? went out without staying for an answer, John xviii. 38. : or, if we do in reality desire spiritual blessings, and delivery from the love and power of sin, it is

too often, as St Augustine prayed before his conversion, Not yet. Such seekers, if they continue still seeking in such a manner, shall never obtain, nor be able to enter in at the strait gate, Luke xiii. 24., for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

Thirdly, All true wrestlers with God esteem communion with him dearer to them than every thing else in the world; hence Jacob, to obtain this, stayed behind not only Leah and her children, but even his beloved Rachel and Joseph, that ever memorable night to him, in which he was honoured with the name of Israel, Gen. xxxii. 28.

What gay flowers are these which grow on the brink of the river! Let me draw near and explore their beauties.

All aghast, I spring back from the awful spot!—Poor flowers, for all your gaiety, the brook is undermining you, in which you will soon be swallowed, and all your beauties destroyed. Just so is it with respect to the wicked and careless in this life; though they may be gay and prosperous, having

more than their heart can wish, the brook of God's infinite wrath is undermining them, and will soon overwhelm them: then shall their beauty consume in the grave from their dwelling, Psalm xlix. 14. From this we may see the state of the wicked, however prosperous, is not to be envied.

This water likewise bringeth me in mind of that near which Gideon and his company gained such a signal victory over the host of Midian, by only using the means of sounding trumpets, breaking pitchers, and holding lamps in their hands, crying, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon," Judges vii. 19---22.

Just so true believers obtain a complete victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh, these worse than Midianites, through using the means of God's appointment, viz. attending to, and knowing the joyful sound of the everlasting gospel; breaking the empty pitchers of self-confidence, and corrupt reason, and holding the lamp of divine revelation in the hand of faith; believing that in and through the sword of the Most High having been awakened against the man that is



his fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. even Christ Jesus, on our account, because he had taken upon him our suretyship, our debt is now paid, law and justice perfectly satisfied, and we acquitted from the charge; which is made manifest by the Lord our surety having been taken from prison, as one who had fully paid the debt of the elect, and therefore ought no longer to lie there, Isa. liii. 8. Matt. xxviii. 2---8.

This brook also recalleth to my remembrance that striking comparison which the Psalmist maketh betwixt himself, longing for the ordinances of God's grace in the tabernacle, and the hart thirsting for the brooks of water.

After that creature has been long and sorely hunted in a dry and parched wilderness, the ardour with which it pants and longs for brooks of water to quench its almost insatiable thirst, is only felt by such a believer as David was, when debarred from holding communion with his God, in the public ordinances of his grace.



Thus did the man after God's own heart, when banished from the public ordinances of God, either by the wicked persecution of Saul, or the unnatural rebellion of his son Absalom, or both, saying, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Psal. xlii. 1, 2. "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God!" Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2.

The more any person longeth for communion with God in the ordinances of his grace, the greater are his evidences for heaven; for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness, Psalm cvii. 9. And our ever blessed Lord hath said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after

"righteousness, for they shall be filled,"  
Matt. v. 6.

On the contrary, the less that any one longeth for communion with God in his ordinances, the less is his evidences for heaven. If they are pronounced blessed who hunger and thirst after righteousness, certainly they who do not so, nor ever will, are, and shall be cursed.

O may I then, whatever others do, often be communing with my own heart concerning what appetite I have for spiritual things, and praying, whatever this be, that it may be increased.

Water is very refreshing to the thirsty traveller; and so are the ordinances of divine grace to the Zion pilgrim: to him they prove as refreshing and strengthening in his heavenly journey, as those wells which the Israelites dug up in the dry valley of Baeca were to them when going to Zion, Psalm lxxxiv. 6, 8.

And as the spies who went to view the land of Canaan returned not without some

of the fruits thereof, having brought from the brook Eschol a cluster of grapes, also of the pomegranates, and of the figs, Num. xiii.

23. In like manner, those who go to the ordinances of the gospel, in order to get a faith's view of the heavenly Canaan, will not return without tasting some of its fruits : for by the brook of divine ordinances grow continually a large cluster of gospel promises ; grapes, pomegranates, and figs of consolation, for the refreshing, comforting, and strengthening, of all true believers ; of which precious fruits they may freely take, and eat, without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. Nay, not only freely eat themselves, but even invite others, saying with the Psalmist, " O " taste, and see that the Lord is good." Ps. xxxiv. 8. And this is one distinguishing mark of all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, they would have others also to taste of his goodness.

This brook likewise putteth me in mind of that out of which the stripling David chose the five smooth stones with which he went against the giant of the Philistines, and who, by only using one of them, prevailed over that blustering defier of Israel, 1 Sam. xvii.



40.---40. Just so every believer, though but a stripling, weak and insufficient of himself to combat against Satan, the world, and the flesh, in the brook of gospel ordinances findeth five smooth stones; namely, saving faith in the merits of Christ, love to God, repentance unto life, a sight of his own emptiness, and a view of the fulness of Christ, by means of all which he prevaieth against, and finally overcometh, those mighty giants.

May I then examine myself, whether I have ever found these smooth stones in the brook of divine ordinances; and if I have ever used them with the sling of divine grace against my spiritual foes, and what success I have had in the attempt. Thus examining myself, through grace, I may come to know how I have profited by gospel ordinances; whether I have wrestled against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, Eph. vi. 12.; and whether, like Paul, I have fought the good fight, 2 Tim. iv. 7.



the first of these is the fact that the  
the second is the fact that the  
the third is the fact that the  
the fourth is the fact that the  
the fifth is the fact that the  
the sixth is the fact that the  
the seventh is the fact that the  
the eighth is the fact that the  
the ninth is the fact that the  
the tenth is the fact that the





*See Page 259.*

## CONTEMPLATION X.

### ON FISHING.

YONDER rustic, just come to angle in the brook, is preparing his rod, and running out his line. Now he views attentively the atmosphere, and anon considers the appearance of the liquid element; pauses a little,

and selects from his hooks the fly which he judges best, and having put all in order, artfully throws the line, and raising his hand, gently leads the impostor, where the stream curls round the stone, by the cavity of the brow, or the prominent osier root: the unwary trout observes the deceitful fly, and is tempted from its covert. As if cautious of the danger, at first it springs at a little distance, but the temptation being renewed, it can withstand the force of appetite no longer, but greedily leaps close, and desperate takes the death; plunging down to the bottom, it sharply feels the dreadful mistake; distracted with the crooked impostor in its mouth, it rushes impetuously down the current, bending the pliant rod, crossing and recrossing the stream, struggling hard to get rid of its unhappy morsel; but all in vain. At length, exhausted, it is slowly dragged, plashing feebly, to the flowery bank.

Just so the adversary of mankind fisheth in the stream of human life, suiting his temptations to the various inclinations of men and women, by which many unwary souls are finally destroyed.

This skilful angler, I perceive, dresses his hook to answer both the day and the water; and just now has on a lucid fly, at which the trouts are taking very fast. In like manner, Satan manageth his temptations to answer the time, constitution, and circumstances, of every one: Sometimes he fisheth with a golden hook, and with this he caught Gehazi, Judas, and Demas, with thousands in every age.

When Satan draweth this hook along the surface of that shallow stream of human life called Poverty, the danger of it is most conspicuous; for many, by too greedily snatching at it, like the fishes that are taken in an evil net, Eccl. ix. 12., come to be suspended by a rope, or gibbet, as a warning to others; but alas! without grace all will not do; no man will be a warning to another. The devil so artfully manageth this hook, in such circumstances, alluring men to catch at it, by holding out to them the grandeur, usefulness, and convenience of riches, and what a noble thing it is to have money to swagger away with, and procure those pleasures which their hearts desire; persuading them, in order to obtain this great good,



which hath two daughters, crying, "Give  
"give," are never satisfied with riches. Nor  
do they appear to do them any more good,  
or fill their desires one whit better than the  
blood or nutriment, which that reptile conti-  
nually sucks, fills or satisfies it.

Such an insatiable thirst for riches, which  
satisfieth not, but only increaseth more thirst,  
is truly deplorable, and those men of all  
others are most to be pitied, whose insatiable  
thirst for riches continually tortureth their  
souls in this world, and destroyeth them in  
the next. "There is one alone, and there is  
"not a second; yea, he hath neither child  
"nor brother: yet is there no end of all his  
"labour, neither is his eye satisfied with  
"riches, neither saith he, For whom do I  
"labour and bereave my soul of good? This  
"is also vanity; yea, it is a sore travail,"  
saith the wise man. And "there is a sore  
"evil which I have seen under the sun,  
"namely, riches kept for the owners thereof  
"to their hurt." And "there is an evil  
"which I have seen under the sun, and it is  
"common among men: a man to whom  
"God hath given riches, wealth, and ho-  
"nour, so that he wanteth nothing for his

“soul of all that he desireth; yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and is an evil disease,” Eccl. iv. 8. v. 13. vi. 1, 2.

While I am meditating, this angler has changed his hook, put on a bait, and sunk it with lead in the deep waters, giving the finny tribe an opportunity to swallow it in secret, without being obliged to come in view. Thus Satan often fisheth with the fleshly bait of uncleanness, in the stagnated pool of corrupt nature; holding it out as most delightful, and a thousand times more satisfactory to the flesh, than its deluded prostitutes have ever been able to find.

Yet sensual men lust after it, and greedily swallow it in the secret intrigues of carnality, and so for a momentary pleasure risk an eternity of misery and woe; at which incomparable folly the devil himself cannot fail to be struck, and for which he will upbraid them in hell through all eternity. Though now he tempt them to commit that sin which he himself was never capable of; whereby many are destroyed, whose deeds never come to the light to be reproved; and even few of

those whose deeds are made manifest, are ever recovered from this snare of the devil, we have reason to fear, if we consult the wisdom of Solomon, who saith, and not of himself, but by inspiration, when speaking of the strange woman, “ none that go unto  
“ her return again ; neither take they hold  
“ of the paths of life,” Prov. ii. 19.

As the angler often makes use of one kind of fish for baits to deceive and ensnare another ; so doth the devil in respect to men and women. Did he not make use of that lewd adultress mentioned in the Proverbs, as a bait to ensnare the young man void of understanding ? Hear the passage, and may every young man take warning by the sinful intrigue : “ For at the window of my house  
“ I looked through my casement, and beheld, among the simple ones, I discerned  
“ among the youths, a young man void of  
“ understanding, passing through the street  
“ near her corner, and he went the way to  
“ her house in the twilight, in the evening,  
“ in the black and dark night : and behold  
“ there met him a woman with the attire of  
“ an harlot, and subtle of heart. (She is  
“ loud and stubborn, her feet abide not in



“ her house : Now is she without, now in  
“ the streets, and lieth in wait at every cor-  
“ ner.) So she caught him and kissed him,  
“ and with an impudent face said unto him,  
“ I have peace-offerings with me ; this day  
“ I have paid my vows. Therefore came I  
“ forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy  
“ face, and I have found thee. I have deck-  
“ ed my bed with coverings of tapestry, with  
“ carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I  
“ have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes,  
“ and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill  
“ of love until the morning, let us solace  
“ ourselves with loves. For the good man  
“ is not at home, he is gone a long journey,  
“ he hath taken a bag of money with him,  
“ and will come home at the day appointed.  
“ With her much fair speech she caused him  
“ to yield, with the flattering of her lips she  
“ forced him. He goeth after her straight-  
“ way, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or  
“ as a fool to the correction of the stocks :  
“ till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird  
“ hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that  
“ it is for his life, Prov. vii. 6---23.

The sin of uncleanness is the bane of so-  
ciety, and that which degradeth human na-



ture below that of the brutal. Serious men not only abhor it, but speak of it with the greatest detestation. "Know ye not," saith the apostle, "that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid," 1 Cor. vi. 15.

The apostle taketh particular notice of the heinous defiling nature of this sin above all others, saying, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body. What, know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" 1 Cor. vi. 18---20.

Trivial as this sin of uncleanness may appear to be in the eyes of licentious men, it is not trivial in the eyes of God, who hath said, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy," 1 Cor. iii. 17. and "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Heb. xiii. 4.

Nor doth the devil count it trivial, otherwise he would not use so many arts and stratagems to ensnare men therewith, nor will they themselves think it trivial in a future state. Nor do they even count it trivial in this life, however they may speak thereof, and often commit it; for, would not almost the most hardened whore-monger be ashamed to commit the sin of uncleanness in the presence of a child, how much more in the presence of an earthly sovereign!

Yet, astonishing wickedness! amazing stupidity! such stick not at indulging their lusts, not indeed before a child, who cannot punish their crimes, nor an earthly judge or sovereign, who could only punish them in this life; but in the presence of Almighty God, the sovereign Judge of heaven and earth, who can cast both soul and body into hell-fire for ever, and will by no means clear the guilty, *Exod. xxxiv. 7.*

This brings to my memory a story I have somewhere heard, which runs thus: "A strumpet, wishing to entice a young gentleman to the act of uncleanness with her, being requested of him first to lead him

“ into some place that would be secret enough  
“ for indulging this desire : she accordingly  
“ led him into a private room ; but upon his  
“ saying that it was not private enough, she  
“ took him into another still more so ; but  
“ upon his saying it would not do neither,  
“ she led him into another still more dark and  
“ secret, and said, there is not a more secret  
“ place in the house ; and sure it is impossible  
“ for any to hear or see us in this place.  
“ Whereupon the young gentleman replied,  
“ O yes, I am still afraid God will see us ; and  
“ unless you can take me into some place  
“ where God cannot see, I dare not satisfy  
“ your desires.”

O that I and every one else would remember that the all-penetrating eye of God is ever upon us, and that darkness covereth not from him, but to him the night doth shine as day, Ps. cxxxix. 12. This, through grace, would deter us from those paths where such destroyers go, and put us upon saying with Jacob in another case, “ O my soul, come not thou in-  
“ to their secret : unto their assembly mine  
“ honour be not thou united, Gen. xlix. 6. lest  
“ thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and  
“ thy body are consumed,” Prov. v. 11.



There is another artifice sometimes used in the taking of fish, which cannot be so well done but in the drought of summer, when there is but little water running either in or out from a pool; and that is, by putting a certain combustibile into the water, whereby the tenants of the stream become intoxicated, swim above, and submit to be taken at pleasure. Alas! doth not the adversary of mankind greatly use the artifice of intoxicating men through the immoderate use of spiritous liquors, and leadeth them on by little and little, from drinking at first merely to satisfy nature in quenching their thirst, to a real inclination for the bewitching juice; which desire he augmenteth in every opportunity where it may be indulged; and even to seek opportunities when no opportunities offer themselves, till at length they become habitual drunkards; which pernicious custom is not only a crime itself, but leadeth to the commission of all others.

He that seeth a drunkard, seeth every thing that is bad, for what crime is there that a drunkard is not capable of? He will almost undertake every thing, and do any thing to



which he is prompted by the devil, his own heart, and cup-companions. Have not the greatest of crimes been perpetrated by men in a state of intoxication? even good men themselves, when overcome by this vice, have been guilty of most atrocious crimes: witness Noah, who, by making too free with the juice of the grape, became intoxicated, and exposed his nakedness, Gen. ix. 20---22. And just Lot, the favourite of heaven, but a little before delivered from the destruction of Sodom, fell into the sin of drunkenness, and committed incest with his two daughters, Gen. xix. 33---36.

It is likewise supposed by some, which supposition is not improbable, if we compare Levit. x. 1. with 9. that Nadab and Abihu, through drinking, offered strange fire before the Lord, for which he destroyed them. An awful warning this to all in clerical orders who indulge this vice; for although they may not suffer the marks of divine vengeance in this life, as Nadab and Abihu did by external fire; yet, without repentance, such cannot expect to escape eternal fire.

This vice, however odious in other men, is doubly so in those who minister in holy things. Let such know, their Master, whose ambassadors they profess to be, is a jealous God ; and, if grace prevent not, will visit that iniquity upon them, and rank such shepherds at last among the goats.

What noise is this ? I am all in a surprise ! a great concourse of people run this way from yonder village, screaming and making a clamorous noise, and one a little before the rest entirely naked.

I am all in a consternation ! whether to stand or run, I am equally uncertain.---The crowd approaches rapidly. Ah ! now I perceive the meaning of this phenomenon : it is a madman, who has broken from his cell, and is running directly towards the river. The screams which I hear are from the crowd, who are alarmed for his safety.

Now they seize him, and are bearing him back to his gloomy abode. Poor man ! his case is very deplorable. How thankful ought all to be for nature's best gift, Reason, and the use thereof !

But what was I meditating on at the time of this alarm? It was drunkenness: And what else is a drunk man but a madman? made so, not by a sinless infirmity, but by his own inclination.

Unaccountable depravity this indeed! that man, who was created after the image of God, and endowed with reason in all its purity, should take pleasure in depriving himself of that little remains of it which the fall hath left, and making himself mad with his own hand!

Did I pity the poor man that is just now carried back to his cell? this man's case is much more deplorable: A drunkard is not only the grief of his family, the bane of society, the devil's drudge, and a destruction to himself, but the open enemy of God; and one, if grace prevent not, who will be made to drink of the cup of God's indignation at last, Psal. lxxv. 8. Rev. xiv. 10,

If the drunkards in Joel's time were called to awake, weep, and howl, because of the new wine's being cut off from their mouths, Joel i. 5., much more reason have they to



awake, and weep, and howl, when they hear from the word of inspiration, which is irrevocable, and more firm than the basis of heaven and earth, that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 10.

This angler, who, a little ago, alarmed as well as myself, had left his amusement, is now returned to pursue his sport, but in a different manner; having taken off the bait, he fishes with a light coloured gaudy fly.

With a hook of this kind, even pride, the devil fished in paradise, whereby he caught our first parents, by holding out to our mother Eve the great endowments, all comprehensive knowledge and excellence to which she would attain by eating of the forbidden fruit. She, believing the serpent, ambitious to be thus ennobled, swallowed the hook, by eating the prohibited fruit, and thereby was not only caught herself, but also assisted Satan in catching her husband, by which an estate of sin and misery was entailed upon them and all their posterity.

And with this hook of pride, the old serpent hath been constantly fishing ever since



in the stream of human life, whereby many in all ages have been caught and destroyed.

Pride is the most hateful sin, and may be justly called the mother, or fountain of all sin. It was that which cast Lucifer out of heaven, and the once perfectly happy pair out of paradise. It was that which deluged the old world, and overthrew the cities of the plain : opened the earth, and kindled the flame which swallowed and destroyed Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and all their company ; made Ahi-thophel strangle himself ; reared the lofty gallows for Haman ; and drove Nebuchadnezzar from the society of men, to graze with the beasts of the field : nay, pride is the foundation and cause of all the hatred, strifes, and wars, whether personal or domestic, civil or foreign, that ever have been, are, or shall be, in the world.

Yet, how surprising is it, that mankind should caress that in their bosoms which is so hateful to God, and destructive to themselves ! Some will say, and I have often been not a little shocked to hear it, that people are the better of a little pride. Awful depravity ! horrid ignorance ! and gross stupi-

dity this certainly is! but it often ariseth from a mistake of confounding pride with prudence: prudence is certainly a cardinal virtue, approved of God, and highly commendable in all; but pride, cursed pride! for I can call it no less, being that primary sin which entailed the curse upon men and devils, is a moral evil, truly hateful to God, and utterly detestable in all; the very least degree of it partaketh of the nature of the whole.

And shall I harbour that in my bosom which turned angels out of heaven, man out of paradise, and hath thrown the whole world into confusion? Forbid it, O God, and clothe me with its opposite, humility.

But what is pride? It is an insolent self-conceit; an unquenchable thirst for pre-eminence, which always hath for its concomitant, envy, that continually gnaws, not the bones, but the soul of its possessor.

The devil fisheth with this hook in the little stream of childhood, as well as in the stronger current of youth, and settled pool of old age. Pride discovereth itself in children, by their passions, and resentments a-

gainst their little companions, for injuries and affronts which they either really have, or imagine to have received ; and by their dissatisfaction at seeing any of their peers caressed above, or even equal with themselves ; a conceit of being thought beautiful, a taste for fine clothes, and the like ; which early sproutings of pride, parents or tutors not checking in the bud, but rather, on the contrary, fostering by laughing at, and indulging them in such follies, it groweth apace with them, as they advance in life, and too often, it is much to be feared, terminateth in their destruction.

But turn, my thoughts ! O turn to a more solemn, yet far less irksome subject. Yonder well plum'd hearse, nodding as it cometh, with two mourning coaches, attended by a few in sable, gravely mounted, bringeth not the news only, but the evidences of mortality along.

Let me step towards the high-way, and inquire whose remains this is ; and while I am informed of the mournful tale, learn to prepare for my own dissolution.



Ah! and is this the direful case? I am shocked at the dreadful story! having been just informed by one of the attendants, that this is the corpse of a young gentleman, who the other evening being at the theatre, (that splendid nursery of vice) imagined himself to have received an affront from a young officer in the army, who passing by the box in which the young gentleman sat to a neighbouring one, the cane below his arm accidentally tipped the young gentleman in the cheek, who happened to be leaning that way; at which, supposing himself highly affronted in the presence of some young ladies near him, fired with pride immediately left the house, sent a challenge to the officer, to settle the affront by an affair of honour, which he accepting, they met next morning, when the young gentleman was shot.

Ah! the folly of indulging pride, and to what degrees of wickedness doth it drive men! Could we now for a moment remove the covering of the other world, it is not improbable, but we might see this young man, with many thousands more in hell, cursing their parents and tutors for not checking that pride in early life, which was the means,



the awful means of landing them in torment.

A good way farther down the river side, I observe several persons together, close by its brink, and some apparently in the water itself. My curiosity is excited to know what they are doing; and in order to discover this, let me walk a little down the flowery bank to yonder eminence, which rises at a little distance from the side of the river, from the summit of which I may clearly perceive what they are engaged in, without intruding myself upon them.

How charming is the spring, and how delightful this verdant walk! but pleasanter far the sources of contemplation which offer themselves to the mind.

From this little height I now discover with pleasure what those persons are employed about: They are fishing; but the scene is agreeably changed; that before was angling, but this with the net: which putteth me in mind of the gospel, that is in scripture beautifully compared to a net, and the preachers of it to fishermen, Matt. xiii. 47. Mark i. 17.

In what respects the gospel, or kingdom of heaven, is compared to a net, and the preachers thereof to fishermen, are at present under my view.

Yonder net just let down, or rather cast into the water, is in order that it may enclose and bring to land many of the finny tribe; so the gospel, or glad tidings, is sent down from heaven to earth, and spread forth in the world by the ambassadors of Jesus; in order that sinners may be enclosed in it, and thereby drawn out of an estate of sin and misery, and troubled sea of human life, to the shores of eternal bliss.

The mesh of that net, I perceive, is only suited to catch fish of a certain size; all below which (though the net surround them all alike) remain without being caught. In like manner, though the gospel net be spread far and wide by the preachers of it, and freely offered to sinners of every description, none but the elect are enclosed therein, and brought to heaven: And that the rest of mankind are not caught by it, is not owing to any deficiency in the gospel itself (which is perfectly suited to sinners of every size,

the greatest as well as the least; none are excepted, all are invited, nay, commanded, and made welcome to come and be saved: and, for our encouragement, the blessed Saviour himself hath said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," (John vi. 37.) but wholly owing to their own unbelief, and not being willing to comply with the gospel terms, Mark xvi. 16. Matt. xxiii. 37.

That any indeed close with Christ, is owing to the infinite grace of God; but the rejection of him is of sinners themselves. Fallen man, it is true, cannot merit salvation; but can damnation: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," saith our blessed Saviour: And again, "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," John vi. 44. and xv. 16. "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," saith the man who was caught up to heaven, Eph. ii. 8.

Many indeed by a nominal profession are enclosed in the net of the gospel, and dragged a while through life, who shall be, like

the fishes that were bad in the parable, cast away at last, Matt. xiii. 48.

Yonder fishermen, I observe, are fouling the stream to darken the water, so that the fish may be more easily surrounded and taken in the net. Faithful ministers of the gospel, though they foul not the stream of human nature, point out the corruption, defilement, and darkness, it hath imbibed through the fall; so that men may become sensible of their lost and undone state, and embrace the light of the glorious gospel.

Those men I observe with poles, are searching under every brow, root, and covert; in order to push out the fish, so that they may run into the net: Exactly so do the ministers of the word, by the means of the law, search out all the refuges of lies under which guilty men endeavour to shelter themselves; so that they may be driven from these haunts, and enclosed in the gospel net.

The general mercy of God is a covert under which many endeavour to shelter themselves: God is merciful, say they, and he never made any of the human race to be damn-



ed; he is infinite in goodness, and therefore we hope he will never destroy us: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11. saying, with those scoffers mentioned by the apostle, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," 2 Pet. iii. 4. Such despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance, Rom. ii. 4.

In order to push sinners from this general covert, ministers of the gospel, these fishers of men, use the word of inspiration, which declareth that God will by no means clear the guilty: and the wicked shall be turned into hell, Exod. xxxiv. 7. Psal. ix. 17. And in God's sight shall no man living be justified, Psal. cxliii. 2. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thess. i.

7, 8.; and there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked, Isa. lvii. 21.

Thus, by the terrors of the law, they are driven from under the presumptuous covert of God's general mercy; but no sooner are they so, but they fly under another shelter, equally dangerous, even confidence in the flesh, and begin to rest in external performances and carnal privileges, hoping these things will commend them to God.

To force them from this also, they are threatened with condemnation: "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," Rom. iii. 20., "and except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matth. v. 20.

Thus sinners are driven from under the shelter of confidence in the flesh also: But anxious still to shelter themselves under a covert of their own choosing and making, they immediately run under the old root of self-righteousness, and endeavour to reform their inward man, by keeping a stricter watch

over their thoughts and words, while they double their external duties, so that God may be pleased with them, and save them from wrath, on account of their strict and holy lives: now they are apt to conclude, however it be with others, all shall be well at last with them: but now and then a sinful thought they observe passing through their hearts, and words they ought not to speak flowing from their tongues, for which they are grieved, but endeavour to make amends to God for such in future, by striving to restrain the lawless wanderers from their minds, and keeping a stricter watch over their tongues. But to drive them from this root of self-righteousness likewise, the sharp law is thrust in upon them, with this malediction, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. This stuns them fearfully, knowing that they have not kept the law perfectly; their recollections now begin to be awakened, they see not only now and then they have broken the divine law, but almost in every instance, times and ways without number; and what to do they know not, they are horribly afraid, terrified to stay a moment long-



er under the false refuge of their own righteousness.

What shall they do, or where shall they fly, to be safe from avenging wrath? In this dreadful plight, when every other refuge they sadly discover to be unavailing, the net of the everlasting gospel, by the fishers of men, the ambassadors of Christ, is freely let down, and spread wide, with a "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matth. xi. 28. And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come: And let him that is athirst come: And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17.

Transported at the all-joyful tidings, they embrace the thrice welcome news, with the



keenness of a condemned man receiving a reprieve from death : thus they are caught in the gospel net and saved.

But ministers, though fishers of men, are only men themselves, and like the seven disciples of old, they may toil all night, nay, all the nights and days of their lives, and take nothing, unless the Lord by his Spirit cause success ; it is then only with the disciples, they cast the net on the right side of the ship, and catch a draught (John xxi. 2,---6.) of elect sinners. “ Paul may plant, and A-  
“ pollos water, but God alone giveth the in-  
“ crease,” 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

My part is now to examine, whether I have been taken captive by Satan at his will, eagerly grasping at his hooks, and swallowing down his baits ; and, alas ! my conscience accuseth me of having done so in too many instances : But have I too seen my lost and undone state by nature, and been endeavouring to find a refuge from divine wrath under any or all of those coverts I was noticing, and have been driven out of them by the terrors of the law ; the Holy Spirit convincing me

of my dangerous situation, and the total insufficiency of such refuges to screen me from the wrath of the Almighty? And have I been led to see that there is no safety anywhere else, but under the covert of Christ's blood and righteousness, and to my sweet experience been taken with the gospel net, and closed with Christ alone for my Saviour, believing that he is both able and willing to save poor, wretched, sinful me, taking him for my all in all?

If this hath not been the case, O my soul! stay not in all the plain, or state of nature, but haste, escape for thy life, and close with Christ, lest thou be overthrown with a shower of wrath and eternal vengeance: Look not behind thee, Gen. xix. 17. "Remember Lot's wife!" Luke xvii. 32.



## CONTEMPLATION XI.

ON A FLOWER GROWING IN A FIELD.

PASSING by a flowery garden, and looking over the wall, I beheld among the flowers some of the footsteps of the renowned, pious, and justly celebrated, Mr James Hervey.

Therefore, lest I should rather draw a veil over the beauties he had exhibited than unfold any more of their charms, I did not dare to enter ; but shall now content myself with contemplating this flower of the field, which here grows in all the simplicity of nature, displaying an elegance of taste, and beauty of form, far surpassing the touch of the most skilful pencil on earth ! All the works of nature which we behold, whether in the



heavens above, or on the earth beneath, shew to the eye of penetration, what they proclaim aloud in the ear of reason, namely, the hand that made them is divine ; “ For “ the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being “ understood by the things that are made, “ even his eternal power and godhead,” Rom. i. 20.

This every one may read in the page of nature, and I at present see it manifested in the texture, growth, and foliage, of this charm of the field.

How exquisitely beautiful and various are its colours ! Could mortal man have tinged it so, or distributed them in such just proportion ? Where are now the painters of Greece, and those well skilled in eastern dyes ? This flower looks them all out of countenance. When compared with its beauties at hand, their finest dyes and paintings are not only coarse, but ugly in the extreme : “ Solomon in all his glory was not “ arrayed like one of these,” Matt. vi. 29.

Whence then has it that delicacy of shape, comeliness of form, odoriferous smell, beauty and variety of colour? Is it from chance, that deity only in name? No, surely; for then chance might as often make and rear up this flower mishapen, ugly, and confused in its dyes, as beautiful and orderly, which is never once the case: this plainly sheweth it to be made and reared by some unerring hand, who never once misseth the least tinge, or maketh the least irregularity in form or foliage.

Is it nature, then? No, but the God of nature, whose infinite power, wisdom, purity, and goodness, are conspicuous, even in this little charm of the field: for what but infinite power, and consummate wisdom, could have made this beautiful plant out of a mass of earth, and that itself out of nothing; tinged it with such delightful colours, and adjusted their proportion so nicely. The beauty and innocence of it, together with its fragrancy, tend to calm the ruffled passions of its beholders when gazing upon it; while it raises a pleasing sensation through all the soul, which sheweth that the Creator of this lovely flower, is certainly pure, holy, and

lovely himself. And when I consider that this delightful plant was created for the pleasure of man, yes, for man alone, for the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air seem to derive no good or delight from it, it leadeth me to contemplate the goodness of God, who indulgeth his creature man with the innocent pleasures of life. How ungrateful then must he be, to take pleasure in those things which are offensive to such a kind Creator? But as his infinite power, wisdom, purity, and goodness, shine forth in the making and rearing of this plant, infinitely more so do they shine forth with resplendent lustre, in raising up for man a plant of renown, Ezek. xxxiv. 29., even the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man, who is the Rose of Sharon, and Lily of the vallies, Cant. ii. 1., whose "name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love him," Cant. i. 3. and well may believers love him who loved them, and hath given himself for them an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour, Eph. v. 2. In him "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psalm lxxxv. 10. the justice of God satisfied, and the mercy of God glorified: And for



ever blessed be his name, that he is not compared to a flower in the garden, where few have liberty to come, but to the rose of Sharon, and lily of the vallies, to which all have free access who will.

This flower, here, growing in obscurity, scatters its odours around, and displays its charms in vain with respect to human beholders : it springs up, blows, flourishes, decays, and dies in this waste, without perhaps ever being seen or admired by any, unless it be some transient wanderer : which brings to my recollection those beautiful lines of the celebrated Mr Gray :

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
“ The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;  
“ And many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
“ And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

And is there not many a bright genius obscured by a low situation in life, which, if otherwise cultivated by a liberal education, and introduced by friends or fortune into public view, might do honour to the state, or be highly useful in the church ; and add as much, if not more, benefit to society,



as this wild flower might contribute to the ornament of a flower-bed in some nobleman's garden ?

Was I just now admiring those lines in Mr Gray, which are at once delightful and striking ? And shall I not much more those of the man according to God's own heart, the sweet singer of Israel, which are transcendently more beautiful and striking, while they are truly applicable to all ? " As for  
" man, his days are as grass : as a flower of  
" the field, so he flourisheth ; for the wind  
" passeth over it, and it is gone ; and the  
" place thereof shall know it no more," Ps.  
ciii. 15, 16.

Man was once indeed as a flower in a garden ; but ever since he was cast out of paradise, he hath been as a flower in a field, exposed to numberless accidents, dangers, diseases, and deaths ; the winds of adversity continually passing over him, and from one generation to another, that of mortality ; so that he is gone away, or carried away, as with a flood, Psal. xc. 5. and the place which once knew him, knoweth him again no more : " Man that is born of a woman is

“ of few days and full of trouble ; he cometh  
“ forth like a flower, and is cut down ; he  
“ fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth  
“ not,” Job xiv. 2.

Man in infancy flourisheth like a flower, springeth up in childhood, blossometh and buddeth in youth, withereth and dieth in old age. But is the flower always permitted to stand till it wither and decay ? No ; it is often cropt in the bud, in the blossom, or when flourishing in all the gaiety of foliage, when its charms most attract the gazer’s eye : And so is man in infancy, childhood, and youth : “ Verily, every man, at his best  
“ state, is altogether vanity,” Psal. xxxix. 5.

How solemn was that cry which the prophet Isaiah was called upon to utter, and how little regarded ! “ All flesh is grass, and  
“ all the goodliness thereof is as the flower  
“ of the field,” Isa. xl. 6. O that men would consider this aright ! It would keep them humble in prosperity ; and what followeth in the same beautiful passage would support them in adversity, namely, that “ the word  
“ of our God shall stand for ever,” ver. 8.

Though men change, fade away, and die like the grass of the field, so that no trust is to be put even in the greatest of them, Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4. God is unchangeable, and of his years there is no end; his promises are faithfulness and truth: He will not change the thing that is gone out of his lips; his word abideth for ever, Mal. iii. 6. Psal. cii, 24, 27. lxxxix. 33, 34. Isa. xxv. 1. 1 Pet. i. 23. 25.

These oxen which are grazing, are not at all charmed with the fragrancy or beauties of this delightful flower: they feed carelessly around it, without paying any respect to it; to them it flourishes unregarded. And what is the reason? It is because their natures are incapable of receiving any pleasant sensation from it. Yet these oxen serve to reprove many of us for our ingratitude to God our benefactor: "For the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," Isa. i. 3.; and are there not, alas! too many in the world who pay (how shall I utter it!) as little respect and regard to the flower which sprang from the roots of Jesse, that plant of renown, Ezek. xxxiv. 29., as those beasts do to this flower of the earth? To such men Christ is as a root out of a dry ground: he



hath no form nor comeliness; they see no beauty in him that they should desire him, Isa. liii. 2.

And what is the cause of all this astonishing insensibility? It is owing to fallen nature; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. till once the Spirit enlighten their minds: then it is only that with the spouse they see Christ to be white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, Cant. v. 10. 16.

But where is now the delightful plant that charmed me so much but a little ago? I cannot observe it. Surprising! what can become of it? Ah! I now perceive it laid low; its stem broken, its variegated cup all shattered, and partly sunk in the mould!

What can have produced such a sudden change! The field is deprived of its comely form, beauty, and fragrance, all in a moment. Gentle flower! thy gaiety is past, no doubt



the foot of one of those clumsy cattle has trodden thee down.

From thy fate I learn that of many mortals; and, for ought I know, may soon be my own. How many, flourishing in all the gaiety of life, health of body, and vigour of youth, long ere ever the wintry blast of age foils beauty on the cheek, or begins to wither the features, are cut down like a flower, Job xiv. 2. by some fatal disease or unseen accident, and all their earthly glory laid low in the clay.

The sight of thee, O hapless flower! in a short time will rather create disgust than pleasure. But far, nay, very far more so would the sight of the fairest face of the most celebrated beauty, prove loathsome to that eye that once could delight in nothing so much as gazing upon its charms, if the covering of the tomb were removed, and the putrid carcase exposed. The lover who once with rapture beheld and praised its form and beauties, and thought himself happy no where else but in her presence, all aghast would turn from beholding so disagreeable a spectacle! Follow him to the tomb, my soul, and

learn the truth of what the wise man saith,  
“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain,”  
Prov. xxxi. 30.

It is only grace and virtue that will outlive the ravages of the grave. Not despising the rose on the cheek, the flower of grace in the heart, is incomparably better: and where these two cannot be found together, but come in competition with each other, the latter be my choice; this will add a sweet fragrancy to domestic life, and leave a pleasant scent behind it, while the other lieth rotting in the tomb.



## CONTEMPLATION XII.

## ON BEES.

THIS walk is truly delightful ; nor would I exchange the pleasure it affords in solitude, for all the splendid entertainments and giddy amusements of public life ; while I read only, or rather attempt to read, in the volume of nature, a few letters of the outlines of the wonderful works of that Almighty Being, who spake, and it was done, commanded and it stood fast, Psal. xxxiii. 9.

What an agreeable humming do these busy insects make, while they roam amid the sunny beams, through the fields and meadows, exploring every new-born herb, while from the heath, primroses, and violets, they chiefly extract their delicious loads, which they bear with joy to their common store.



May I, like them, amid the cheering beams of the Sun of righteousness, in fancy roam through the works of creation, providence, and redemption, these fields of inexpressible delight, admiring with wonder and gratitude every work of God : but chiefly extracting from the precious promises,---these inestimable flowers of grace which grow in the field of the scriptures,---soul-reviving sweets, not only for my present comfort and subsistence, but for a store against the winter of desertion, when no green thing may appear to me to flourish in all that precious field, owing to keen convictions under such darkness, which, like nipping frosts freeze up almost every comfort of the soul : The benefit of this David and Heman experienced in such a time.

They will also prove cordials in the moments of dissolution, when every thing else in the world is of no avail : An apostle calls such flowers exceeding great and precious, 2 Pet. i. 4., to which all the saints on earth, and all the redeemed in heaven, will put to their hearty Amen.

These little bees are busy all the spring, summer, and harvest, in providing for the approaching winter. O my soul, learn a lesson from the bees and ants, to make much of thy time, improving the season of grace, by laying up for thyself treasures in heaven ! Matthew vi. 20. And may God, of his infinite mercy, forbid that ever thou have to complain, with the church of old, “ The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved, Jer. viii. 20. That this may not be thy doleful case, seeing that there is yet balm in Gilead, fly on the wings of faith to that plant of renown, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is as ointment poured forth, Cant. i. 3. (which attracteth all virgin bees, even true believers to this flower, who sprang from the root of Jesse) and there by the mouth of faith feed in time, and lay up for eternity.

Bees are often attacked by wasps and other enemies, which deprive them of life, and bear off their treasures ; but, blessed be God ! though devils and wicked men harass the saints here much, and often deprive them of their natural existence ; yet they cannot rob them of their treasures : No, for

they are laid up "in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal," Matth. vi. 20. All that they do, by taking away their lives here, is only putting them out of that which is chequered with many miseries, into an eternal life of joy and happiness, and the full enjoyment of their heavenly inheritance: therefore such enemies, instead of doing them material injury, as they intend, do them unspeakable and eternal service, which they intend not.

Samson having gone down to Timnath, came to the vineyards thereof, where, behold a young lion roared against him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid; the carcase of which, as he on a time returned thither again, he went to see, wherein was a swarm of bees, and honey, that afforded him matter of an excellent riddle, which he put forth to his wedding guests, saying, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness, Judg. xiv. 5, 6, 8, 12, 14. With how much more propriety may believers say of Christ Jesus,---who came down to this world, and



in the garden of Gethsemane and cross of Calvary, bruised the head of the old serpent the devil, that roaring lion, 1 Pet. v. 8. and spoiled principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, Col. ii. 15.---that he hath out of the eater brought forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness to his people.

He hath done great things for us, Psalm cxxvi. 3. ; he hath not spoiled principalities and powers only, but made all the evils of life, persecutions, afflictions, temptations, and death itself,---nay, all things, to work together for good to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28.

A strange riddle, indeed ! that saints should receive benefit from the persecutions and temptations of men and devils ; yet it is certainly true, and affordeth incomparably more sweetness to the soul of a believer, than the honey which Samson found in the carcase of the lion did to him. Satan's sifting Peter as wheat, Luke xxii. 31. only blew away the chaff of self-confidence from him ever after. Satan's messenger buffeting Paul, kept him a humble dependant on the suffi-



ciency of God's grace, 2 Cor. xii. 7---9. The persecutions of Joseph's brethren sent him to Egypt for good : and, to hasten his great preferment with Pharaoh, the lewd adulteress got him cast into prison. And Moses was obliged by Pharaoh, who sought his life, to fly from Egypt to Horeb, where he met with God, from which time he became God's vicegerent, Exod. iv. 16. and the redeemer of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Saul's persecution of David prepared him for relishing more the crown which he afterwards wore : And John was banished from the society of men to the island of Patmos, that he might receive a glorious revelation from God.

These works of the roaring lion proved in the end sweet honey-combs of comfort to all those worthies ; and so will trials, temptations, persecutions, afflictions, and death, prove in the end to all the people of God.

I perceive there are many of the gayest flowers which these busy insects pass over, while they alight with apparent pleasure on others much less esteemed for their beauty.

Just so is it with true believers ; not those empty shews which the men of the world take pleasure in, are their delight ; these, like the skilful bee, they slightly pass over, knowing well there is no substantial good to be found in them ; while they soar on the pinions of faith, far above carnal enjoyments, and alight, with sweet contemplation, on the things which are above : on these are their affections set, and from them they gather honey, even spiritual joys and comforts, far more precious to the soul than honey, or the honey-comb : while they look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

All the spring and summer season, bees delight in and are busied in ransacking flowers and herbs for the delicious sweets ; but especially do they bestir themselves to activity, that part of the season when the honey dews are to be found : Before, they contented themselves with feeding and loading from herbs and flowers, but now they perch on the trees in swarms together, loudly buzzing

their joys, while they gather honey in abundance.

If any should impede them in their aerial journeys to or from the trees enriched with such dews, how should they be made to smart by their keen stings for such interruptions. In like manner, the saints delight in, and constantly attend on the stated ordinances of grace, but especially do they take pleasure in the more solemn ordinances of the gospel, even in the holy sacraments, these peculiar memorials of Christ's love and death: In these precious seasons, heavenly dews fall abundantly for the refreshment of his people; then it is believers call forth every grace, in lively exercise: before, they contented themselves with the ordinary institutions of the gospel, these salutary herbs and flowers planted in the church, but now they soar higher on the wings of faith and love, and feast on Christ himself, the tree of life, who inviteth them, saying, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved," Cant. v. 1.

When such showers of blessing are falling, were the world, the devil, or the flesh,



to interrupt their joys, keenly would they draw out the sword of the Spirit against them, saying with Ephraim, "What have I to do "any more with idols?" Hos. xiv. 8. and with Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work, "so that I cannot come down," Nehem. vi. 3. and with David, "Depart from me, "ye evil doers, for I will keep the com- "mandments of my God," Psalm cxix. 115.

Tinkling on brass or iron is very often used in the swarming of bees, for the purpose of alluring them to settle and hive. In like manner, the joyful sound of the everlasting gospel is proclaimed, in order that sinners, who have been driven from resting in the old stock of Adam by the terrors of the law, and know not whither to fly for safety, may be induced to take refuge under the righteousness of Christ, the last Adam, 1 Cor. xv. 45.

But as bees do not always halt, however one tinkle, nor yet, when clustered, take the hive without further assistance; so though all men hear the glad tidings of the everlasting gospel, yet to many it proveth but as "sounding brass, or a tinkling sym-



“ bal,” 1 Cor. xiii. 1. they come and go to ordinances, and are never a whit the better, either with respect to principles or practice ; and even though many be enticed thereby to settle in Christ by a nominal profession, saying unto him, “ Lord, Lord !” yet will he profess unto them, he never knew them, Matth. vii. 21---23. unless through the energy of the Holy Ghost they be planted in him.

How much doth it then concern all gospel hearers to know whether divine efficacy have gone along with the word preached, uniting them by faith and love to Christ Jesus, seeing that “ many are called, but few are chosen,” Matt. xxii. 14.

Owners of bees feed their stocks only in winter, rainy, and cold seasons, when these insects are not able to fly abroad in quest of their subsistence, or when no flowers are to be found in the fields : and is not the Lord very gracious in feeding the souls of his people in private and secret ordinances, when they are deprived of attending upon him in public, either through persecutions, diseases, infirmities, age, or other necessary

lets ; but can those expect such supplies, who wilfully neglect, through idleness, sloth, or any other unwarrantable excuse, to wait upon him in the public ordinances of his appointment ? No ; but, on the contrary, may be afraid they shall be suffered to starve by the great Master, who neglect to improve such sweet seasons of his grace ; and that they, who will not assemble with the saints here, in his ordinances of grace, at his footstool, shall not be allowed to assemble with them at his right hand on the great day of accounts, and so not in glory before his throne above.

Many select the Sabbath from all the other days of the week, for the purpose of seeing friends, visiting the sick, or taking medicine ; so that they may not retard their work by so doing on other days ; yet such would probably shudder at observing any of their fellows following their ordinary employment on that holy day.

Strange stupidity ! do not they themselves virtually do so, who, rather than their labour should be interrupted on other days, or a single penny be lost by doing such things,

postpone all till Sabbath ; and I am afraid, if grace prevent not, those who habitually do so, will be ranked among Sabbath-breakers, and despisers of the ordinances at last.

I remember a charge I have somewhere heard, which a considerable farmer used to give on Sabbath to his family and servants ; which was, not to stay at home from the public ordinances of the gospel, unless they had such an excuse as they could carry to the judgment of the great day. O that this charge may sound freshly in the ears of my soul every Sabbath, and in the ears of all privileged with gospel opportunities !

In every hive, naturalists inform us, there are a number of drones (and these work not) which often fly about towards the approach of night, making a greater buzz than any of the other bees ; yet are they necessary to be preserved for a while, being the only males, so that workers may be propagated.

And are there not likewise a number of drones in the world, even men who do nothing at all for the glory of God, or the good of society ? These, like those drone bees, make



often a great noise, both by word and deed, against God and his people; for, "lo! thine enemies make a tumult," saith David, "and they that hate thee have lifted up the head," Psal. lxxxiii. 2. "They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog. Behold! they belch with their mouth, swords are in their lips," Psal. lix. 6, 7.

But it is a great comfort for believers that their Lord, who is on high, stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumults of the people, Psal. lxv. 7. that such wicked drones should be so long preserved in the world, may at first view seem strange, yet it is highly necessary; for, among other reasons, best known to the Divine Being, this is none of the least, that many of the elect are to spring from their loins; when this, and other ends are accomplished, they will then be driven away in their wickedness, Prov. xiv. 32.

And as the death of such bees, after the breeding season, whether it be natural or accidental, is but little regarded or resented by the workers; so, when such wicked drones perish, the wise man telleth us there is shout-



ing, Prov. xi. 10. Such live undesired, and die unregretted.

Owners of bees, in order to ascertain nearly what quantity of honey is in the hives, are often poizing them : in like manner the people of God, that they may know the strength and truth of their graces, ought frequently to be weighing their principles, lives, and conversations, in the balance of the sanctuary : If this were done, I am afraid that, on many fair professors, Tekel might be written, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting," Dan. v. 27.

A man cannot approach with safety a hive of bees in the swarming season, without being equipped with a suitable dress, to defend him against their venomous stings : So no believer need think to be in safety while surrounded by the world, the devil, and the flesh, without having on a dress of defence, even the Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. xiii. 14., and the whole armour of God, Eph. vi. 13. The benefit of such a dress the royal Psalmist declareth he experienced, when speaking of his enemies, saying, " They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as

“ the fire of thorns ; for in the name of the  
“ Lord I will destroy them,” Psal. cxviii.  
12.

O that I may be thus arrayed and accou-  
tered, so that in the name of the Lord I may  
destroy and root out those swarms of idle  
and wicked thoughts, that continually, as it  
were, like bees, encompass my heart, and so  
overcome my spiritual foes.

In windy weather bees are very irritable,  
and apt to sting any person who approaches  
near their hive ; but, in doing so, they often  
do more harm to themselves than those on  
whom they inflict the venomous smart ; as  
they frequently thereby lose their stings, for  
which they are discarded the hive, and treat-  
ed as members unfit for society : The same  
it is with respect to many men, when pride  
bloweth up the passion of anger : O how  
ready are they then to resent injuries ! ne-  
ver considering that thereby they often hurt  
themselves most ; for without timely repent-  
ance, their unlawful anger will bring down  
the wrath of the Almighty upon themselves,  
and debar them of the peaceful society above.

O that I and all men may then cheerfully submit to the teaching of Him, "who taught "as never man taught," and hath said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in "heart," Matt. xi. 29. "This is my com- "mandment, that ye love one another as "I have loved you," John xv. 12. "He "that ruleth his spirit," saith Solomon, "is "better than he that taketh a city," Prov. xvi. 32.

O that men would shew their courage and valour this way, and not in hasty and angry passions at one another: be this my study and constant care, well knowing what evils hasty anger hath done to many of the people of God themselves: Did it not exclude the meek Moses from entering into the land of promise? make Jonah insolently justify his unwarrantable passion to his Maker? and Paul and Barnabas part from one another, Num. xx. 10.---12. Deut. iii. 25, 26. Psal. cvi. 32, 33. Jon. iv. 8, 9. Acts xv. 39.

How seasonable then is that admonition, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret "not thyself in any wise to do evil," Psal. xxxvii. 8. This passion was implanted in



man for a noble purpose, even to shew his zeal for the glory of his Maker, in ardently testifying against sin: but, O! how much is it abused, when used in a sinful manner! then, instead of glorifying God, we dishonour him with his own gift: "Be ye angry, and sin not:" "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil," saith the apostle, Eph. iv. 26, 27. And, indeed, being angry at any thing but sin, is an inviting the devil to take possession of our hearts, and what pleaseth him well.

May I therefore, for the future, keep a stricter watch over my spirit than I have done in times past, knowing that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, James i. 28. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression," Prov. xix. 11.

These insects in their society are not without a kind of monarchical government; for there is only one female in every hive, which naturalists denominate the queen. She is



not only remarkable for fecundity, being the breeder of all the workers, but maintains a superiority over the whole, being more grave in her deportment, seldomer seen, and armed differently from the rest. It is she that gives them the signal when to swarm, when to cluster, and where to hive.

Say now, my soul, doth not the wisdom of the Creator greatly appear in the economy of these feeble insects? In subordinating the workers to the dominion of the queen bee, and in enduing her with superiority over them? And no less conspicuous is the wisdom of God in the management of men, in subordinating some under the supremacy of others. If this had not been the case, all had been anarchy and confusion: It is therefore of absolute necessity, in this imperfect state of things, that there should be power and authority, and superiors as well as inferiors, that the great chain of human society may hang as it were by links in uniformity together, and the greatest as well as the least be dependent on one another for mutual support; for if all the lower links of a per-

pendicular chain were cut off from the highest, there would then be no chain ; and if, on the other hand, the highest were cut off, the others would fall to the ground : Just so would it be with human society. How much reason have men then to adore the Creator of all for his infinitely wise disposal of human affairs ?



## CONTEMPLATION X.

## ON OBSERVING A SWALLOW.

WELCOME, sweet harbinger of summer!  
Quick as an arrow newly launched from  
the bow of an Indian thou fliest along.  
Terrible as the war-hoop sounds in the  
savage ear, no less so does thy shrill, or  
twittering note, to that of the insect tribe,  
which thou now pursuest through the air  
with open mouth.

By whom wert thou awakened from thy  
long repose, or rather advertised, in distant  
climes, of the setting in of the insect season  
in our island, that thou art so opportunely  
come? Come, while yet the vernal months  
remain, anxious, as it were, that thou might-  
est lose no opportunity of improving the pre-  
cious approaching season.



O that I and all men living, who are on our way to the other world would learn a lesson from this bird of passage ! even to improve our precious seasons of grace. Strange ! that man who is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, Job xxxv. 11. should be outdone by the stork in the heaven, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow, which all know and “ observe the time of their coming.” With these ancient Israel were reproached, who knew not the judgment of the Lord, Jer. viii. 7. And by these may not I, and many a one else, be put to shame ? who alas ! have too much neglected, and still do, to improve the precious ordinances of the gospel, not only in the spring-time of youth, when every mental power is most lively, and easily impressed ; but also in the summer and prime of life.

The want of the saving knowledge of the mercy of God, made our blessed Lord and Saviour weep over Jerusalem, saying, “ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes,” Luke xix. 42. and the want

of this ought to make every one who feel-  
eth it weep for himself, and at the same time  
to bless the Lord, that the things which be-  
long unto his peace are not yet hid from his  
eyes, but that still the door of mercy stand-  
eth open, and God is yet saying, " Behold,  
" now is the accepted time, behold now is  
" the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will  
" hear his voice, harden not your heart.  
" Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ;  
" for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?"  
2 Cor. vi. 2. Psalm xcv. 7, 8. Ezek. xxxiii.  
11.

To behold the swallow now again in our  
climate is truly delightful, and teacheth me  
the truth of what the wise man saith of the  
God of nature, that " he hath made every  
" thing beautiful in his time," Eccl. iii. 11.

If then every thing be beautiful in its  
season, and we are pleased to see these birds  
of passage, in this joyous time of the year,  
again re-visit our land, how incomparably  
more delightful is it to see, in the spring-  
time of childhood and youth, men coming  
to, and attending on the ordinances of the

gospel, improving the precious seasons of grace !

The swallow, as it were, knowing that her stay in this island must not be long, is willing to make the most of her time, so skims the air with active wing in pursuit of her food, and performs the other functions, for which she came, with alacrity : And shall man, who was sent into this world for business of an infinitely greater importance, trifle away in indolence his short time, and neglect the things that belong to his everlasting peace ?

The swallow chiefly pursues and lives upon food which it gathers in the ærial heaven ; such as the beetle and gnat ; and if at any time she be forced to peck from the earth, it is more through necessity than choice : so every believer mainly seeketh after celestial things ; spiritual and heavenly enjoyments are these in which he chiefly delighteth ; and these alone are the food of his soul, though through necessity he is obliged in part to care for the things of this life.



When this bird is observed to fly near the earth in pursuit of insects, it is accounted a sign of dark and rainy weather, but, on the contrary, when pursuing them high in the air, it is an indication of settled and clear. Just so, when a believer beginneth to set his affection on the things of the earth, and delighteth in carnal enjoyments ; it is a token that heavy clouds of darkness, and showers of afflictions and crosses, will inevitably ensue : whereas, on the other hand, when he setteth his affection on things above, not on things on the earth, Col. iii. 2. it evidenceth to himself, and all who know his frame, that his sky is clear, and shall brighten more and more, till at length he shall enjoy a perfect serenity above.

The swallow seems to delight in the society of man, by its building and hatching about his habitation, on the chimnies of houses, and often in churches. For this last privilege, the royal Psalmist, when in a state of exile from the public ordinances, seemed to envy this bird in being allowed to rear its nest, and hatch about or near the altar of the Lord, saying, “ How amiable are thy “ tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! my soul



“longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts  
“of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth  
“out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow  
“hath found an house, and the swallow a  
“nest for herself, where she may lay her  
“young; even thine altars, O Lord of hosts,  
“my king and my God,” Psalm lxxxiv. 1.  
---3. But, blessed be the Lord, we of this  
land, in this age, have no reason to envy the  
swallow in this, for we have perfect liberty  
to wait upon God in his ordinances, even pu-  
blicly in his house of prayer, there being  
none externally to make us afraid.

Such was not the case with many of our  
fathers; yet, alas! we their children make  
but an ill improvement of these privileges,  
for we either too often neglect the public  
worship of God altogether, or go to the or-  
dinances to rear up a shelter for ourselves,  
even that of our own righteousness, which  
is no better than the mud and straw with  
which the swallow builds her nest, and which  
is easily swept down; valuing ourselves upon  
our punctuality in attending the ordinances,  
and observing the letter of the law; and so  
in our nest of performances hatch self-con-  
ceit, imagining we are good Christians, all

shall be well with us. But such a fabric will only deceive those who trust therein, and both they and it shall be swept away at last.

It is only they who build on the rock Christ, and take shelter alone in his righteousness; that shall be saved. Every true believer therefore goeth to the ordinances, not so much for the institutions themselves, as in them to meet and hold communion with the God of ordinances.

The swallow, it is said, by means of the herb celandine, or swallow-wort, opens the eyes of her young ones, and brings them to sight: However this be, O that parents among men would use the means which God hath put in their power, for opening the spiritual eyes of their tender offspring to see their lost and undone state by nature, and that there is no salvation any where else, but in Christ; and would pray often to him to anoint their young eyes with eye-salve, that they may see, Rev. iii. 18. The want of this care among parents is no doubt the reason of so many blind, ignorant youths, in our day.

●

The swallow teaches her young ones to take food in the air, in this manner : While they are playing near where the dam is hawking for flies, and the latter has caught a mouthful, by a signal given by the parent, the young one and she advance towards each other, and meet at an angle, when the old one imparts what it has taken into the mouth of its offspring, which, all the time it is receiving, utters a small twittering note of gratitude.

O that parents of the human kind, would learn from this instance what duty they owe to their tender progeny, even that of accustoming them early to attend on the public ordinances of the gospel, by bringing them to the house of God to get spiritual food for their souls, and taking pains to impart unto them Christian knowledge. For such a blessing children ought to utter songs of gratitude to God, and to bless him for such parents.

The swallow, too, acts as an excubitor for several other small birds, and when it spies the hawk approaching, sounds the alarm ; then presently all the others that are near



collect in a body, and give battle to their common enemy, by rising up high in the air, and coming down with force on their foe: this they do again and again, till he is beat far from their place of residence. Just so should ministers of the gospel, those watchmen which are set on the walls of Jerusalem, Isa. lxii. 6. do, when they observe the people in danger of being destroyed with respect to their spiritual interest, whether by innovations in religion, the spread of error, the infringement of their sacred privileges, or in any other way whatever; then it is they ought to put the trumpet to their mouths and sound an alarm, Hos. viii. 1. Joel ii. 1. even warn the people, so that their blood may not be required at their hands, Ezek. xxxiii. 3---6. and also do what in them lies to arm and strengthen them against such spiritual enemies, collecting, as it were, all their force together, rising up to heaven in prayer, and using the weapons of their warfare, which are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ: and



having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when their obedience is fulfilled, 2 Cor. x. 4---6. and thus beat and banish such errors, innovations, and corruptions, whether in doctrine, worship, or discipline, away from the church of Christ.

This bird is said to be most alert in time of thunder, when sulphurous clouds are impending. In like manner should all true believers be most active in fleeing to God by prayer, in humbling themselves, and in performing the other duties of a Christian life, when the Lord's judgments are abroad in the earth, and heavy clouds of his displeasure hang over a guilty land.

When the Lord's voice of judgments crieth to a city, country-side, or nation at large, those alone are the men of wisdom that see his name, hearkening to the rod, and Him who hath appointed it, Mic. vi. 9. well knowing that sin is the procuring cause of all evil; and it is not for nought when God lifteth up his hand to punish a nation, or people; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, Lam. iii. 33.

Whether therefore his judgments be on nations, families, or individuals, they ought to have this effect, to make all who are concerned learn righteousness.

It is an awful circumstance, and a sign of great depravity, when they still remain careless: at such stupidity the prophet seemeth to have been deeply affected, when he crieth out, "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see: but they shall see." Isa. xxvi. 11. So they that will not see the Lord's hand in a way of mercy, shall in a way of judgment.

It was when Jonah thundered in the ears of the Ninevites, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," that the inhabitants thereof "believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them: for word came unto the king of Nineveh: and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh (by the decree of the king and his nobles) saying, Let neither man

“ nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing :  
“ let them not feed nor drink water : but let  
“ man and beast be covered with sackcloth,  
“ and cry mightily unto God ; yea, let them  
“ turn every one from his evil way, and from  
“ the violence that is in their hands. Who  
“ can tell if God will turn, and repent, and  
“ turn away from his fierce anger, that we  
“ perish not ? And God saw their works,  
“ that they turned from their evil way ; and  
“ God repented of the evil that he said he  
“ would do unto them ; and he did it not,”  
Jonah iii. 4. to the end.

We see what a blessed effect such humiliation had ; and shall heathens put Christians to shame ? Shall we in this land, in the year 1801, when the Lord is thundering over our guilty heads in his awful judgments, by war abroad, tumults and famine at home, with disorders in the state, and divisions in the church, such as never were known in the annals of Britain, not humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and cry mightily unto him, that he would avert the judgments, which, like dismal clouds, not only gather thicker and thicker, but



are begun to pour down vengeance on our land ?

These judgments, or similar, we may well expect (according to the experience of other nations, recorded both in sacred and profane history,) shall continue on our island, till they either make us turn unto him that smiteth us, or destroy us from being a nation altogether.

Let none think they are innocent in bringing down these heavy judgments with which this kingdom is at present afflicted ; for every one of us as individuals, of all ranks, have had a high hand in procuring those evils in which we are involved by our sins and iniquities.

O that we would all then nationally and personally humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and turn unto him who smiteth us, that iniquity may not be our ruin, Ezek. xviii. 30. However others do, may I be complying with that sweet invitation, " Come, my people, enter thou into thy  
" chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ;  
" hide thyself as it were for a little moment,



“until the indignation be overpast; For,  
“behold! the Lord cometh out of his place  
“to punish the inhabitants of the earth for  
“their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose  
“her blood, and shall no more cover her  
“slain,” Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

What becomes of the swallow tribe when they leave us in autumn? Whether, in caverns, or hollow places of the earth, they remain in a torpid state during the winter; or emigrate beyond the seas to some warmer climate; or cluster together and descend to the bottom of lakes, is equally uncertain, and what naturalists are divided in their opinions about. But not so is it with respect to man when he dieth; for wherein reason is weak in this, revelation steppeth in to assure us, that man goeth either to heaven or hell.

That all men would wish to be happy at last, is a desire founded in nature; but that any are so at length, is wholly owing to grace. Many, nay I may say all, desire, with Balaam, to die the death of the righteous, and to have their last end like his, Num. xxiii. 10. but few truly desire to live a righteous, and holy life. Nature alone may make a man

request to die happy, but it is grace only that can make any desire, and really live the life of the righteous.

May it then be my care through grace to do so, that in the spring morning of eternity, even that wonderful morning of the resurrection, I may with respect to my body return from the dust with joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8., to sing, with all the redeemed, the song of Moses and the Lamb, for ever and ever, in the paradise of God!



## CONTEMPLATION XIV.

## ON THE EVENING OF THE DAY.

THE bright monarch of day having but a little ago disappeared in the west, darkness beginneth again to resume her ancient reign, and claimeth a primeval right ; while the village bell calls the laborious husbandman from his toil, and invites the weary traveller to rest.

The herds forsake their dewy pastures, and with their udders richly fraught for the dairy, move lowing on, to be discharged of their most nutritious burdens, one of the chief blessings of Canaan : and the woolly tribes are shut up in their folds.

The verdure of the fields darkeneth on the sight, while night spreadeth her sable veil



over the face of nature. Where is now the pleasant landscape I so lately beheld? It is lost to my view: and the warbling people, with their wing-covered heads, sit silent on the spray: only the bird of eve ushers in the gloom with her irksome solitary dirge, while labour reclines her head on the bosom of rest, and balmy sleep, endeared by toil, refreshes animal life,

And is this delightful day come to an end? O my soul, so shall soon the day of this life, and all its bustle, be silenced in the tomb. How much then doth it concern me, and all men living, to be putting by our work in our twelve hours! O that while it is called to-day we might labour for the meat which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life, John vi. 27., seeing the night of death approacheth, wherein no man can work; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, Eccl. ix. 10.

This dewy evening, calm and serene, mindeth me of the close of a Christian's life in old age. Happy alone then is he, who, while his head is flourishing like an almond

tree, can calmly reflect on a well spent life \* ; such shall come to his grave “ like as a shock “ of corn cometh in in his season.” Job v. 26.

As the Lord once said unto Jacob, “ Fear “ not to go down into Egypt : I will go “ down with thee into Egypt, and I will al- “ so surely bring thee up again,” Gen. xlv. 3. ; so he will say, as it were, to such a one, Fear not to go down to the dust of death : I will go down with thee, and I will also surely bring thee up again.

But O how reverse is it with the hoary-headed sinner, who hath spent his days in the pursuits of sin and vanity ! Conscience that was rocked asleep in the narrow, short, bed of carnal delights, in the close of life awakeneth from her slumbers like a mighty giant, and screameth ten thousand times more terrible in the ears of the guilty soul than that owl from the ruinous tower does in mine ; while remorse and sorrow, more

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\* This did the great Addison when on his death-bed ; grasping the hand of a young friend, he said, “ See “ with what peace a Christian can die !”

fierce than the vultures of the desert, prey upon the mind, ushering in the worm which never dieth.

From this learn a lesson, O my soul, to be husbanding the time well, and answering the end of thy creation, that the evening of my life may be calm and serene, and I may say with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

How tasteless now are all the beauties of nature. The flowery meads, and delightfully chequered lawns, which but a little ago appeared in all the gaiety of dress, charming the eye of the beholder, now shrouded in sable, please no more. Just so shall it be with all the pomp of this world in a dying hour. O that mortals would be wise in time, and chiefly seek after that which would then yield real satisfaction! Will frothy conversation, vain entertainments, licentious company, the



sparkling bowl, or midnight revels, or (what is more plausible) wealth or fame, dignified stations, high sounding titles, or great honours, give that? No, no; these may, and often do, fill the death-bed with thorns; religion alone streweth it with roses. Nothing less than an interest in the merits of Christ will comfort the soul, when hovering on the utmost verge of life.

Though religion be scoffed at by some, disregarded by many, and trifled with by the most part of mankind, yet there is a reality in it which all must either sweetly or awfully experience. Many complain on a death-bed of not having been religious enough, but never one of having been too much so.

There are many fools in the world, but none so great as those who leave their salvation-work till a dying hour: in these trying moments, though reason be continued, which is often not the case, tossing sickness and racking pains, will leave the mind but little time for serious meditation: Besides, how many are snatched away in a moment?



Think seriously on this, ye giddy mortals, who are spending the morning and prime of your days in the pursuits of sin and folly ; if ye will not, I will here draw Solomon's bow, (but not at a venture), and shoot that scripture-arrow, which will stick fast in your conscience one day : " Rejoice, O young  
" man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer  
" thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in  
" the ways of thine heart, and in the sight  
" of thine eyes ; but know thou, that for all  
" these things God will bring thee into judg-  
" ment." Eccl. xi. 9.

The traveller who has this evening taken up his lodgings, forgets his toilsome journey in the arms of sleep : What matters it now to him, though his way were crooked and rough ? he is now at his journey's end, and rests as sweetly as he whose path was straight and smooth. Just so is it with respect to the Christian when he cometh to die, and take up his lodgings in the grave : What matters it then to him, though his journey through life were strewed with poverty, sickness, crosses, and trials \* ? he is now at his jour-

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\* Such was the lot of Lazarus.

ney's end, and can rest as sweetly in the house appointed for all living, as he who washed his steps in butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil \*. Job xxix. 6.; this remembers his pleasures no more, and that hath forgotten his sorrows.

From this may I learn, calmly to bear the ills of life, and when a few years are past, perhaps months, days, or hours, if I sleep in Jesus I shall rest as quietly in the tomb as the Christian whose life was almost one continued round of tranquillity.

What ought to make Christians patiently bear their trials, is the salutary consideration that they are all measured out to them by the hand of their heavenly Father, who in consummate wisdom giveth what is best; nor need they doubt his love: "He that spared" not his own Son, but delivered him up for "us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. If he hath given to us that heavenly pearl of infinite value, and withholdeth no other spiritual blessings, much less will he withhold

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\* Such was Abraham.

twixt the soul and God, must lie open for ever; for as the tree falleth, so it shall lie. True, indeed, they will be looked over in the morning of the resurrection, by the eye of unerring justice; but not the smallest alteration will be made. The insolvent debtor shall be condemned to the prison of hell till he shall have paid the uttermost farthing to law and justice, which can never be the case. O that I from this may take warning to have my accounts with God all cleared in Christ, before a dying hour! seeing that after death there is no more work.

What grave harmonious sound is this which I hear, broken by discordant pauses? Methinks it proceedeth from yonder cot: Let me approach the homely edifice, and learn the meaning.

O, now, I perceive it is a poor man at worship with his family, reading each line before it be sung. Happy were it for the world, if all those who have families were thus employed evening and morning: but alas! this is not the case; the generality neglect this reasonable service, and thereby shew themselves more brutish than the brutes themselves; for the "ox

“ knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib.” Isa. i. 3.

If the love and goodness of God will not engage men in this grateful service, methinks that dreadful imprecation uttered by the Prophet should alarm their consciences : “ Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.” Jer. x. 25. And is it not awful to think that many who bear the Christian name, notwithstanding the solemn engagements they come under to perform this duty, when they are receiving the ordinance of baptism for their children, should trifle with their vows ? Such I would address in the language of an inspired writer, “ Be not deceived ; God is not mocked,” Gal. vi. 7., one day you will have to account for all the engagements you have come under to the Lord : think then what your reckoning will be.

But there are others who dare not neglect this important duty altogether, yet do it only by halves ; such are those who in the morning, when their spirits are most vigorous and lively, begin the day with the pursuits of the



world, and only close it with God, when they have nothing else to do. When the family, fatigued by labour, recline their weary heads in the prayer; and sometimes asleep, and sometimes awake, and sometimes properly neither, imagine they hear distinctly the pithless words which fall from the listless tongue of their yawning, drowsy, parent or master, which afterwards trying to recollect, they find all was deception, and they remember no more of them than the idea of a forgotten dream: Nor know they often when he falters out, Amen; till he himself, or some other, surprised by the silence, start from his knees, and jog up the rest of his sleepy companions.

Is this any thing else than an offering of the torn and lame to God? But "cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing." Mal. i. 14. And can you read this who follow such practices, and not see your own doom? but though this service be not always gone about in the evening with such languor as has been described, yet those who give the vigour of their spirits in the morning to the world, and reserve on-

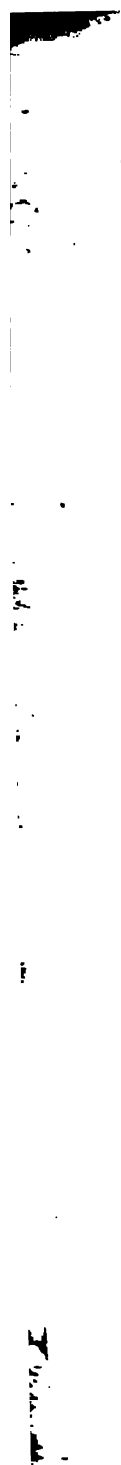
ly the dregs of the evening for God, I am afraid will come under this curse: the best you can make of it is only half service. Now, if a farmer pay the one half-year's rent ever so punctually, if he still continue to neglect the other, will his landlord be satisfied with his conduct? And think ye God will be well pleased with such a partial service?

The omission of family-duty is often followed with the neglect of secret prayer, whereas the performance of the one is a strong indication of the observance of the other. The worship of God is a duty founded, not only on revelation, but even in nature itself; witness the worship which the heathens pay to their imaginary deities. And shall the poor blind heathens put enlightened Christians to shame?

From all this may I learn, like this poor man, evening and morning, to be presenting my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is my reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1., renouncing my own righteousness, depending upon nothing in or about me or my services, for acceptance with God, but only in the merits of his Son Jesus Christ

alone: And so may I close this evening,  
praying for a blessing upon my poor labours  
this day, both to myself and others. .

THE END.







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